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Feature

Mingle with Our Mutts: A Successful No-Frills Adoption Event

It's easy, cheap, and fun. It brings animal groups together from all over the county (and beyond). It gives every group greater visibility in the media and more exposure to potential adopters. And, it finds homes for roughly 1,100 dogs (and cats) per year. It's *Mingle with our Mutts*, the brainchild of Kellie DiFrischia of the Columbus Dog Connection in Columbus, Ohio.

Mingle with our Mutts is a two hour adoption event held the third Sunday of every month at the county animal shelter. The event runs from noon to 2 pm and is open to any animal welfare agency that wants to bring animals. In winter, the event is held indoors in the county's fleet garage. In summer, it's out on the shelter lawn. Groups are prohibited from selling items of any kind. There are no decorations, music or extracurricular activities—it's all about adoptions. The cost for groups to participate is zero. The set-up time is about fifteen minutes. "Many of the groups we work with are all-volunteer," says DiFrischia. "The whole idea is, you show up with your dogs and that's all you have to do—simple."

Mingle with our Mutts began in June 2002. The county shelter was pleased to host the event, seizing on the opportunity to bring more people to the facility. Fourteen animal welfare groups participated in the first *Mingle*. Today, there are as many as 24.

Two to three hundred dogs are featured at each event. Several hundred potential adopters show up as well. Says DiFrischia, "What has really made this event successful is its consistency—people know it's the same time, place and day every single month. If they're looking for a dog, they know this is the place to start."

"The collaboration of so many animal groups has generated a lot of media support," continues DiFrischia. "Our biggest local TV station airs a spot for us every *Mingle* Sunday. Just the other day, an advertising agency offered us a free billboard. And because of our collaboration, we were able to get a grant from the Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust to run an ad in the classified section of our local newspaper every Sunday.

Our main goals in doing this event were: to increase adoptions, to provide groups with more visibility, and to educate the public about pet overpopulation. We've been successful with all three."

Mingle with our Mutts Guidelines:

All dogs, puppies, cats and kittens at the events must be spayed/neutered.

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- Placement policies are up to each group's discretion. Many groups have a home visit policy and vet reference check and *Mingle* is a place where the animals can be seen and generate interest but not immediately adopted.
- All dogs must be kept on a short leash.

For more *Mingle* information, go to www.columbusdogconnection.com or contact Kellie DiFrischia at kdifrischia@yahoo.com.

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