

SHOW ME THE MONEY
BY ALEXANDRA KLEINKOPF



I'm Too Sexy for my Doggles®

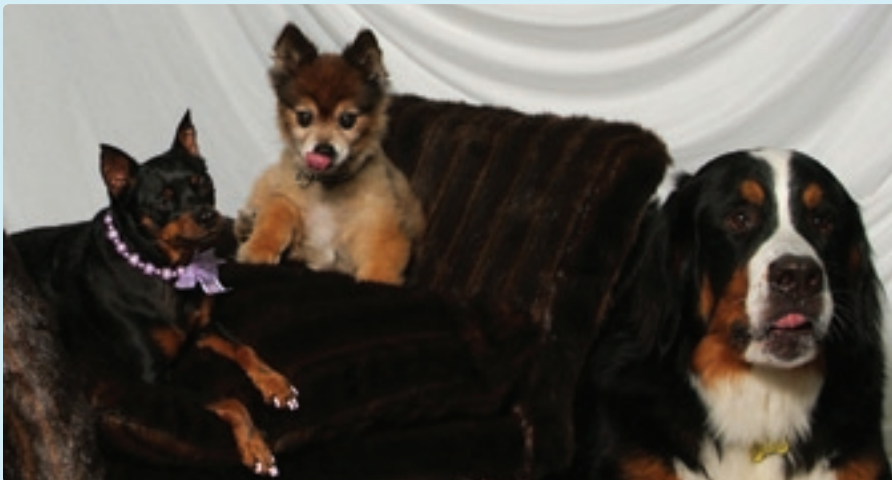
On the doggie catwalk, you can never be too bitch or too thin

The pooches of Portland, Ore., strutted their stuff last June for a good cause at the first annual Next Top Dog Model gala. Sponsored by the city's dog-friendly Hotel Monaco and LexiDog Boutique & Social Club, 100 percent of the proceeds went to the Oregon Humane Society (OHS).

"I'm a complete believer in the Oregon Humane Society; I love everything about what they do, and so many of our dogs that come to daycare have come from the humane society," says Suzanne Hein, owner of LexiDog, an upscale daycare and grooming boutique in Portland.



At a 2006 event at the Hotel Monaco, Art the yellow Lab won hearts—and the Director of Pet Relations position. DAVID LYTLE/OHS



After being dubbed Portland's Next Top Dog Models, a very faaaabulous Clarence the Bernese mountain dog and Javier the Pomeranian strike a pose with Susanne Hein's posh mini pinscher, Lexi. PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIMI

Hein and her managers came up with the idea for the fashion show after Hotel Monaco's successful search for a doggie "director of pet relations." The hotel had asked OHS dogs to compete in a fashion show to find the best dog for greeting guests in the lobby. Hein then proposed Portland's Next Top Dog Model to OHS.

"We collaborate on a lot of joint events with LexiDog," says David Lytle, public information manager at OHS. "They have OHS animals over there for adoption. As part of our outreach events, we'll often put an animal over there for a day."

LexiDog staff put fashion show fliers around the city, calling all dogs with the perfect pivot ... and even those without. For a \$20 entry fee—raised to \$25 for this year's event—pooch contestants supplied their general information, headshot, personality and style statements, along with the reason they should be Portland's next top dog ... model.

Nearly 100 dogs entered, many of whom had been adopted from OHS; but only 10 finalists got to strut their stuff on the runway at Hotel Monaco. "It was packed," says Hein, estimating a 200 headcount. "I couldn't believe how many people were there." For a \$5 cover charge, spectators could enjoy the show over hors d'oeuvres and "Mutt-tinis," the gala's signature cocktail (which tasted remarkably like a Cosmopolitan).

Dogs were classified as either small (30 pounds or less) or large (more than 30 pounds) and judged by a panel of Portland media personalities. "They judged on the same type of things you would judge for a modeling competition," says Hein, citing poise and panache as main criteria. Pooches paraded down the runway twice: the first time *au naturel*, the second time in attire that expressed their personalities. According to Hein, most competing dogs already owned extensive wardrobes; one chose to model a hiking ensemble, while another opted for classic evening gown appeal.

“We really didn’t try and make it into a dress-up competition; we really wanted to highlight the dog,” Hein explains. “You want a dog that’s going to be engaging, and that’s also going to be well-mannered.” While there were no baton-twirling acts that evening, contestants showed off their favorite trick during the “Personality” portion of the competition. Some cut the rug with hind leg dance moves, while others flaunted their vocal talents by barking on command.

When the results came in, it was a night for male models: Clarence the Bernese mountain dog took the title for the large dogs, and Javier the Pomeranian mix was crowned king fashionista of the small dogs. Despite his arthritis and the health problems he endured before his rescue, Javier knew how to work a crowd. “He was just this little trooper that got up on the stage; he walks kind of sideways—but he captured everybody’s heart,” says Hein.

Javier and Clarence each took home a \$500 doggie bag, packed with goodies like a luxury dog bed, a year’s supply of Solid Gold dog food, and a coupon for a free, non-anaesthetized teeth cleaning, all courtesy of LexiDog.

But they weren’t the only critters who won big loot—the revenue from the gala and the competition entry fees generated about \$3,000 for the animals of OHS. Hein projects that this year’s show will more than triple that figure.

“We have a great shelter here, but the shelter’s only one part of the equation: It’s also getting these animals out into the community through things like LexiDog or Next Top Dog Model,” says Lytle. “People who might not come down to the shelter will see those animals in these other locations, and that will spur adoptions.”