

ON LEASH IN SEQUIM — FOR NOW



DIANE URBANI DE LA PAZ (2)/PENINSULA DAILY NEWS

David Brown takes Willy the Welsh corgi mix and Ollie the golden retriever for a walk in the snow Monday with fellow Sequim Dog Park Pal Margaret Preston and her Hungarian Komondor, Janos.

Bucks, barks for dog park

Sequim free-run advocates raising funds, eye 2007 opening

BY DIANE URBANI DE LA PAZ
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SEQUIM — Picture the cure for cold-weather blues: a love-fest, a dog day, a frolic in the sun.

Yes, those seem an awfully long way off.

But the Sequim Dog Park Pals, undaunted by the specter of winter, are making progress toward their goal of a park where dogs run free and humans watch and chat.

Visions of dogs romping off-leash dance in their heads. And the Pals hope supporters of Sequim's dog park will take no long winter's nap.

The group formed last April after Sequim police officers apprehended dog walkers who'd broken the city's leash law in Carrie



Janos is one of the Sequim residents who'd use the off-leash dog park expected to open in the spring.

Blake Park.

Since then, the Sequim Dog Park Pals, a growing group of volunteers, has become a partner

with city government to build Clallam County's first off-leash play area.

"The city has no budget for a dog park," said David Brown, a founding Pal.

"We said, 'We'll raise the money, so we can have it now,' rather than waiting until some year in the distant future when Sequim does have such funds lying around.

The City Council approved the Pals' plan in May, and last summer, city Public Works Director James Bay oversaw grading of the space on the east side of Carrie Blake Park.

TURN TO DOG/A6

Dog: Playground will be just under two acres of space

Nothing to bark at

When asked whether dogs need the sweaters and booties so popular at pet emporiums, veterinarian Heather Short said, "No comment."

But Short, who works with Brian Marts and Tev Barros at Sequim Animal Hospital, had a few morsels of advice for dog owners.

"Avoid prolonged exposure to the cold; don't leave [a dog] in the car," she began.

And if you warm up your car's engine inside the garage, don't leave your pet in the garage with it.

"Make sure your dog's water doesn't freeze up,"

Short added. Dehydration can be as serious a danger in wintry weather as it is in summer.

Dogs with shorter fur are more sensitive to cold, of course, but when they're exercising, they're usually fine in chilly temperatures provided they're not out too long.

And those fashion accessories "certainly don't hurt," Short said, "as long as they're not sopping wet and left on."

To learn more about plans for the Sequim off-leash playground for dogs and people, visit

www.SequimDogParks.org or call 360-683-1894.

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Initially, Bay said the playground would be only 1 acre, but he later landscaped just under 2 acres, planting grass seed and installing an irrigation system.

Brown, designer of the project's Web site, www.SequimDogParks.org, lists the features the park will have if enough money comes in: a separate area for small dogs, benches, a water fountain, a gazebo, a community bulletin board and an agility course.

Lighting may eventually be added.

KC Construction, a Sequim-based contractor, has already donated and begun building a \$10,000 fence.

Dana Hyde, whose Metal & Mud sculpture studio opened earlier this year on Spruce Street in Sequim, has promised to fabricate custom gates.

Trash cans, signs listing rules and poop-scoop stations will also be part of the park, but the Pals must pay for those.

Bay said he looks forward to a springtime volunteer work party to install them plus some play fixtures for dogs.

\$32,500 price tag

The park will cost \$32,500 to construct; following the in-kind and cash donations, the Pals have \$14,050 to raise before they can finish the playground.

The Web site makes donating easy, with a page for credit-card information and tiers of support from the \$25 "hot dog" donation to the "best of show" level of \$101 or more.

To simply be a Dog Park Pal, it's \$10 a year. All supporters will be invited to Pals events, such as dog training seminars and breed-specific

parties.

What's more, "you'll gain the love and appreciation of thousands of dogs in our community," the Web page promises.

This is a whimsical fundraising campaign for something that will provide down-to-earth benefits, said Pal Margaret Preston.

A dog park "builds community," said Preston, who moved to Sequim three years ago from Delta Junction, Alaska.

She and her Hungarian Komondor, Janos, exercise often at Carrie Blake Park. And like other Sequim residents, they could use a place to move unfettered by leather or nylon.

The Pals will present a series of free public lectures on dog health and behavior starting in spring, said Brown, adding that the off-leash park is designed to improve quality of life for dogs and owners.

A well-romped canine is a happier, healthier, better behaved dog, he said, and the benefits extend to humans.

Canine, human harmony

Dog parks across the country provide "a great way to meet people, make friends, and get some exercise," he said.

Those without their own dogs won't be fenced out of the park, Preston added. Everybody will be welcome to watch the beasts run and play.

On its "Benefits to Society" page, the Pals' Web site puts it in more formal language:

"In an era when people are often reluctant or afraid to approach or converse with a stranger, off-leash exercise areas bring people together."

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