

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Pets, owners mingle for a cause at Columbia Pet Expo Unleashed

By [Greta Weber](#)

June 22, 2013 | 6:53 p.m. CDT



Boone, a mastiff, left, touches his nose to Nibbler, a dachshund-Yorkie mix, during the Columbia Pet Expo Unleashed event on Saturday the Columbia Canine Sports Center. | [Sini Stephan](#)



Mari Morales uses a treat to walk her dog, Charlie, through an agility course at the Columbia Pet Expo Unleashed event on Saturday. | [Sini Stephan](#)



Fuppy, a 10-week-old orange tabby, lays in her kennel during the Columbia Pet Expo Unleashed at the Columbia Canine Sports Center on Saturday. | [Sini Stephan](#)



Hazel Blaisdell, 14, holds her cat, Franceen, the mascot for No Kill Columbia during the Columbia Pet Expo Unleashed on Saturday. Franceen was chosen as mascot after her picture raised almost \$1,000 during an online mascot competition by No Kill Columbia. | [Sini Stephan](#)

Owners brought their cats and dogs out to the Columbia Pet Expo Unleashed at the Canine Sports Center on Saturday. The event raised money for No Kill Columbia and featured several vendors offering natural foods and toys for animals. | [Sini Stephan](#)

COLUMBIA — A 175-pound mastiff named Boone lowered its drooling face to sniff a small white puppy and its pocket-sized companion at the first ever Columbia Pet Expo Unleashed on Saturday.

The mastiff and dozens of other dogs and their owners attended the daylong event at the Canine Sports Center. The gathering was an opportunity for pet product vendors and local animal shelters to interact with pet enthusiasts while raising money for animal advocacy organization No Kill Columbia.

No Kill Columbia is a nonprofit organization that promotes animal rights and pet spaying and neutering. The money raised during the event will go toward the organization's efforts to build a local spay and neuter clinic. The organization has raised \$20,000 through previous fundraisers.

Melissa Kron, chairwoman of No Kill Columbia's spay and neuter project, referred to Columbia's lack of a spay and neuter clinic as "a big void."

"Columbia needs an easily accessible, low-cost spay and neuter facility," Kron said.

Effective spaying and neutering is one of the ways a community can become "no kill." In order for an organization or city to receive a "no kill" designation, at least 90 percent of the animals that come into shelters must leave alive, Kron said.

According to [No Kill Columbia's website](#), the euthanasia rate at local shelters is about 44 percent to 50 percent. Kron hopes opening a spay and neuter clinic will reduce that significantly. The organization must raise \$100,000 to build a clinic.

Boone County Animal Care, the newest animal shelter in Columbia, also works to reduce the animal euthanasia rate. It finds foster homes for rescue animals that might otherwise be euthanized.

"We pride ourselves on being fresh, modern, open and forward thinking," board member Amanda Burke said. "We find ways to say 'yes.'"

Briana Kille, who fosters animals through shelter Second Chance, came to the event with her two dogs, Dylan and Lulu.

"There are a lot of people that want to responsibly fix their pets," Kille said. "It would make it less stressful for low-income families."

Second Chance volunteer Hazel Blaisdell brought her cat Franceen to the event. Franceen won a competition to become No Kill Columbia's mascot and attends local events that promote animal causes. The 4-year-old black cat walked around with Blaisdell while she visited the vendors. The event featured several businesses that sell all-natural food and toys.

Treats Unleashed owner Teresa Miller said the recent organic craze has helped her business. The all-natural pet supply store sponsored the free event.

"We are finally getting recognition as people begin to eat healthier for themselves," Miller said. "If you're eating healthy, you start to think about your pet."

Supervising editor is [Katie Moritz](#).