

Niagara SPCA holds 'Star Wars'-themed paint night

BY ELIJAH ROBINSON

Contributing Writer

Come on over to the bark side.

Observing May the 4 in its own unique way, the Niagara SPCA held its third "Paint Night with Pooches" event, the first with a theme – a "Star Wars" theme.

Dog owners brought their pets or chose shelter dogs to paint "Star Wars"-themed canvas paintings with. Options ranged from Chewbacca to Yoda to Darth Vader.

"Because it was dedicated to 'Star Wars,' we ended up making character stencils from the movie, so people were able to pick what they wanted," said Liz Marshall, director of events and marketing.

With a \$30 payment, participants received a unique, 11-by-14-inch canvas painting, a free glass of wine through a partnership with A Gust of Sun Winery, and snacks and bottled water.

According to Marshall, this event saw the most shelter dogs used for a paint night – with four shelter dogs and 13 community dogs. It was up to two dogs in a session, and sometimes the dogs painted together.

"It was just overall one of our

most fun fundraisers," she said. Marshall mentioned shelter dog Rocco as a highlight for his painting of Chewbacca. Rocco, a 4-year-old who has made his rounds on social media, was with the Niagara SPCA for 396 days after losing his owner before he was adopted.

"One of our volunteers, Rachel, had come in, and she chose Rocco to paint with, and he did an amazing job of Chewbacca," Marshall said.

This event not only works as a fundraiser, but also gives shelter dogs a chance to find a home and an owner who loves them. If the dog is already spayed and neutered, dogs could be taken home on the same night, Marshall said.

"Sometimes, families choose a shelter dog, (because) maybe they have an older dog at home and they don't have a dog, and then this is a way for the possibil-



ity of a dog to get adopted," she noted. "In the future, we're hoping that this is another avenue for an adoption process, outside of a typical meet and greet. This is more like a fun venture where they can come in and have some wine, some snacks, paint with (the) dogs, and hopefully they

bond."

Being one of the smaller SPCAs in the community, Marshall said events like these make the organization more visible and engage the community in fun activities.

"It's also a way that we can partner with other small businesses in the community, as

well," she added.

Marshall said this was the third paint night of the year (starting from March). Going forward, she said there are plans to do paint nights once or twice a month.

"The community really loves these, so we're just going to continue them on," Marshall said.

Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls USA welcomes Roadside Diner to food court

A new fast-service restaurant is joining the food court at Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls USA (1900 Military Road, Niagara Falls), as local favorite Roadside Diner is set to open its doors. The restaurant offers a menu of hand-formed burgers, a variety of hot dogs, chicken sandwiches, fries and other sides, as well as milkshakes and floats.

Owned and operated by Niagara County resident Jennifer Pettitt, Roadside Diner was conceived as a food truck in 2021, and has been featured at many local festivals and events in the past couple years. The Fashion Outlets location is its first brick-and-mortar restaurant, featuring a similar menu as its food truck counterpart.

With 20 years in the hospitality business, Pettitt is no stranger to serving great food at a fast pace.

"My staff is looking forward to this new venture at the Fashion Outlets Food Court, which gives us a year-round space to showcase our menu to a wide variety of regional and visiting guests," Pettitt said. "It also allows us seating, which our food truck does not provide."

"We are thrilled to welcome Roadside Diner at the Fashion Outlets, as its menu features something different than our other food court offerings, allowing our guests a more well-rounded dining experience," said John Doran, general manager of Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls USA. "We know our local and visiting guests will enjoy freshly made hamburgers and chicken sandwiches, as well as



Roadside Diner owner Jennifer Pettitt serves up a hot dog on opening day at the Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls USA. (Submitted)

the well-known regional favorite: Sahlen's hot dogs."

Roadside Diner will be open regular mall hours: from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday. For more information on the Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls USA, visit www.FashionOutletsNiagara.com, "Like" on Facebook, or follow on Twitter and Instagram @FashionNiagara.

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