

CARLOS GONZALEZ • cgonzalez@startribune.com (above), JIM GEHRZ • jgehrz@startribune.com (below)

Stuart (above), a Chesapeake Bay retriever, romped with his owner Bryan Mueller at his farm in Brook Park, Minn. Amy Gossman (below) and her schipperke, Princess, waited for their turn to show at Land O'Lakes Kennel Club Dog Show in St. Paul in January. Stuart and three of Gossman's dogs will be at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show Monday and Tuesday in New York City.

TOP DOGS



Get ready to root for the home team. Follow these Minnesota pooches from their farms to the prestigious Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show.

By SARA GLASSMAN • sglassman@startribune.com

It is Super Bowl time for dogs. Instead of footballs, there are show leads and spray bottles, for careful grooming and misting furry coats. Instead of a touchdown, there is the approval of a judge's assertive arm pointing to the best in breed, best in group and finally, best in show.

But for these MVPs, there is no big money bonus or even a ring — just a prestigious title. For all of the others, there is the honor of competing at the 130th Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, the second-longest running sporting event in the United States (behind only the Kentucky Derby).

Stuart's first trip to the dog-eat-dog world

This year, 2-year-old Champion Wyndham's Valor (you can call him Stuart) will enter Madison Square Garden's artificial turf-covered show ring for the first time.

With a distinctively lush, warm chocolate coat and a playful wink that alternates eyes and hints that he's up to no good, Stuart is always ready for a competition. At the Land O'Lakes Kennel Club Show in St. Paul in January, the stunning Chesapeake Bay retriever followed his handler, Mary Kraus, 29, around an indoor show ring.

Stuart patiently stood still in anticipation of a treat. After the judge carefully inspected him from teeth to bushy tail, Stuart, led by Kraus, ran (with a signature extra bounce in his step) across the ring and lined up next to other dogs in the sporting group.

A few minutes later, the judge surveyed the group and pointed to a golden retriever as winner, then, without hesitation, to Stuart as runner-up.

That was a typical weekend for Stuart. On most days, he lives a much less orderly life. He applies his enthusiasm to chasing squirrels and birds and roughhousing with "father"/owner Bryan Mueller, 39, at the 16-acre farm in Brook Park, Minn., he shares with his significant other, Jeriann Rowe.

Westminster continues: The dogs are being prepared for the big show starting Monday in New York City. **E5** ►

Online: For more photos of the local dogs getting ready for Westminster, see www.startribune.com/lifestyle.

INSIDE: MORE DOGS THAN YOU CAN SHAKE A STICK AT.











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fetching style


OPHELIA


ALI


LULU


MR. MAGOO


PUCK



Photos by TOM WALLACE • twallace@startribune.com

JULI JAY AND MOCHA wear matching raincoats from Woozie Wear (on Jay: $225; on Mocha: $75 at www.wooziewear.com). Mocha's Swarovski crystal collar starts at $38, from Lulu & Luigi, 952-929-5858. Contact the Humane Society for Companion Animals at 651-645-7387.

Dressed-up dogs

• They're cute whether or not they're into couture — and they've all been adopted into loving homes.

By SARA GLASSMAN • sglassman@startribune.com

When Juli Jay and Mocha first met in the Green Room at KMSP, Ch. 9, last March, it was love at first sight.

Mocha was in the studio as part of the station's "Pick of the Litter" feature with the Humane Society for Companion Animals in St. Paul. A rescued Yorkshire terrier, Mocha had been surrendered at the Humane Society. "His breed needs a lot of attention and the family who adopted him didn't have the time," said Jay, KMSP's morning news traffic reporter. "I can now consider myself a parent in some respects."

Jay and Mocha have been inseparable since. Mocha rarely leaves Jay's side and runs up to his carrier and begs to be put in it as a signal that he wants to go — and go along he does, whether it's to the TV studio or a shopping mall.

As for Jay, she didn't want to traumatize Mocha (Mokie, for short) any further by changing his name post-adoption, but she coincidentally has a personal attachment to its meaning. "I drink mochas every day," she said. "People say, 'Only you, of all people, would end up with a dog named that.'" Definitely, meant to be!

Sara Glassman • 612-673-7310

OPHELIA
female yellow Labrador and retriever mix
Age: 9-10 weeks old.
Adopted: Right after this photo shoot!
Favorite treat: Liver Treats.
Favorite activities: Giving kisses, licking faces and eating like a pig.
Wearing: Pink and green polo, $32, www.trixieandpeanut.com.
Contact: For other pets like her, visit www.homewardboundrescue.com.

LULU
female Maltese
Age: 5 on March 15.
Rescued: In August 2002, from a puppy mill in Illinois.
Adopted: Liz Sand
Hangs out: At Lulu & Luigi (she helped inspire the store!), working behind the desk, doing sales, and loving life.
Wearing: Little Lily pink coat, $140, pink ultrasuede hair bow, $10, Little Lily pink heart rain boots, $75, and pink heart snuggle sack, $50. All from Lulu & Luigi (952-929-5858, www.luluandluigi.com).

PUCK
male, special breed (probably a wiry terrier cross)
Age: 9-10 weeks old.
Favorite toys: Squeaky toys and tennis balls.
Favorite activity: Licking faces, sleeping, playing some more with his buddies.
Wearing: Juicy Couture Vest, $45, select Marshall Field's stores, see www.fields.com for locations.
Contact: Puck found a home the day after the photo shoot. Some of his siblings are still available, visit www.homewardboundrescue.com.

ALI
female albino boxer
Age: About 2 years old.
Rescued: She was a stray. After five weeks at Animal Control, she was going to be euthanized.
Adopted: One month ago by Mariah Larson.
Favorite treat: Anything! She was starving before she was rescued so she loves all food.
Hangs out at: Lulu & Luigi, where her mom is the manager.
Wearing: Sweater, starts at $55 (depends on size), Swarovski Crystal collar (starts at $38), OPI toe nail Pawlish, $11.
Contact: Underdog Rescue and Placement, www.underdogrescue.petfinder.com.

MR. MAGOO (AKA GOOZY)
male West Highland white terrier
Age: 7 years old.
Owned by: Scott Hierlinger.
Favorite treat: Frosty Paws, frozen treats for dog.
Favorite activity: Riding in the car. He looks forward to Saturday because it's all about a day trip.
Wearing: Polo sweater, $55, www.trixieandpeanut.com.
Contact: Goozy was chair-dog for the recent Bubble Lounge fundraiser for the Animal Humane Society in Golden Valley, www.animalhumanesociety.org.

To see more photographs of these stylish dogs, go to www.startribune.com/lifestyle

spending it



Heart dog bed: $200, Lulu & Luigi
Heart bandana: $3.99, Petco
Plush hearts dog toy: $7.99, Petco
"One of us is single" leash: $20, Lulu & Luigi
Comfort heart pillow: $19, Lulu & Luigi
Claudia's Canine Cuisine dog treats: $5.99, PetSmart
Toy diamond ring: $20, Lulu & Luigi
Leopard bra toy: $14, Lulu & Luigi
Sweetheart cookies and Valentine's drizzle bones: $3.50 and $2, Lulu & Luigi
"I ♥ boys" T-shirt: $38, Lulu & Luigi
Rhinestone letter collar: $18, Lulu & Luigi
La Pooch perfume: $43, Lulu & Luigi
OPI Pawlish nail polish: $11, Lulu & Luigi

GLEN STUBBE • Star Tribune

A day for puppy love

More than 9 million pet owners are expected to extend their Valentine gift-buying to their pets this year, according to the 2005-2006 American Pet Product Manufacturers Association National Pet Owners Survey. And dog owners are leading the charge — 5 percent of dog owners plan to buy their pets gifts, vs. 2 percent of cat owners. ¶Sure, that voice in your head may tell you it's pathetic, and your friends might agree. But that's not stopping many of us from lavishing something on the pet who, in many cases, is the only source of year-round, unconditional love in the house.

A GOURMET TREAT

Bone- and heart-shaped cookies made with carob and drizzled with vanilla yogurt are selling big this year at local pet shops. Nathan Harrison, a manager at Bone Adventure in Minneapolis, said he's restocking their selection every day. Lulu & Luigi in St. Louis Park and Wayzata carries similar gourmet treats year-round. They also carry kitty caviar and catnip cigars.

You can pick up a treat for yourself and one for your furry friend at Isle's Bun and Coffee Co. in Minneapolis. They always have complimentary dog bones on hand for their customers' companions. Great Harvest Bread Co. sells bags of homemade whole-grain dog bones for $3.50.

Mainstream pet stores also have treats to celebrate Valentine's Day. PetSmart carries an assorted box of goodies made by Claudia's Canine Cuisine.

A VACATION

For $49 a night you can leave your pooch at the Club Med for canines while you and your human companion head out of town for a romantic getaway. The Top Dog Country Club in New Germany offers spa services, storytelling and even a "yappy hour," complete with classical music and home-baked biscuits. Dogs stay in suites with heated floors and wrought-iron orthopedic beds, mood lighting and music. The place is popular around holidays, and it's already booked this Valentine's Day. Reservations for holidays fill up two to three months ahead of time.

A DAY AT THE SPA

When Lulu & Luigi opened a store in Wayzata in December, they added the Grooming Pawlour for the ultimate pet-pampering experience. They offer everything from customized shampoo aromatherapy treatments and pet-a-cures to full doggie makeovers.

PetSmart is offering specially priced grooming packages through Valentine's Day, including cherry-scented moisturizer and cologne.

A NEW OUTFIT

Ann Bakewell, a frequent shopper at Lulu & Luigi in St. Louis Park, recently bought a few Valentine's outfits for her Yorkshire terrier, Ciao Bella. She picked up the "I ♥ boys" T-shirt, a pink sweater with a matching rhinestone hairpiece and a cashmere sweater with a big red heart. "To me, she is my child and I treat her that way," she said.

Mariah Larson, who manages the St. Louis Park Lulu & Luigi shop, said that Valentine's Day trails only Christmas and Halloween for spending by pet owners. Mariah's albino boxer, Ali, is featured in today's Star Tribune Signature section. "Me and my girlfriends who don't have dates will rent silly movies and spend it with our dogs," she said.

"They're good companions."

AIMEE BLANCHETTE

WHERE TO FIND IT

Bone Adventure: Three locations in the Twin Cities. Call 612-378-0211 or visit Boneadventure.com
Lulu & Luigi: 3844 Grand Way, St. Louis Park; and 812 E. Lake St., Wayzata; 952-929-5858; www.luluandluigi.com
Great Harvest Bread Co.: Five locations in the Twin Cities. Call 1-800-442-0424 or visit www.greatharvest.com
Isle's Bun and Coffee Co.: 1424 W. 28th St., Minneapolis; 612-870-4466
Top Dog Country Club: 5120 Vega Av., New Germany; 952-353-2600; www.topdogcountryclub.com

what's out there

For your Valentine: Heart Warmers from Wrapables can help keep loved ones warm while walking the dog or waiting for the light-rail train.
Features: Snapping a thin metal disc heats up the inside gel to 130 degrees in seconds. It stays warm for about an hour. After it cools, boiling it in water returns it to its original state.
Cost: $5.50
Store: The Bibelot Shops. Four Twin Cities locations. Call 612-379-9300 or visit Bibelot.biz.

