

Pups in tuxes and paw-dicures at pet-friendly Fur Ball to support PAWS Chicago

By Candace Jordan



Auctioneer Extraordinaire David Goodman conducting the 1st of two auctions for the 18th Annual PAWS Chicago Fur Ball

Pups in tuxes were among the highlights at the 18th annual PAWS Chicago Fur Ball on Nov. 15 at the Drake Hotel.

Over 700 guests, hundreds of pets and 250 volunteers helped raise funds for PAWS, one of the largest no-kill animal shelters in the Midwest, and its many life-saving programs for Chicago's homeless animals.

The sold-out event was co-chaired by Melissa and Michael Canning and Frances and Chris Renk, with honorary co-chairs Corey and JP Marchetti. Fox 32's Sylvia Perez, Jake Hamilton and Natalie Bomke served as emcees for programs in the Gold Coast Room and Grand Ballroom. Torrey DeVitto, a "Chicago Med" actress and animal welfare advocate, was a special guest.

During the evening, elegantly clad partygoers enjoyed posing on a red carpet with their furry friends, bidding on silent and live auction items and dancing to two live bands, Maggie Speaks and Spoken Four. Canine and feline guests were treated to a pet buffet and a spa where they received massages, scent spritzes and paw-dicures.

Twenty homeless dogs, puppies and kittens were the stars of an adoptable-pet showcase. They included Eko and Ed, tiny kittens found in a dumpster at three weeks old; Matilda, a 3-month-old American Staffordshire mix who survived the deadly parvo virus after receiving lifesaving care from PAWS Chicago's medical team; and Olivia, a 10-year-old Boston terrier who was brought to a veterinary clinic by her owner to be euthanized because she was having accidents after being left alone for long periods of time. Thankfully, PAWS came to her rescue.

During a **live auction conducted by David Goodman**, guests bid on one-of-a-kind packages that included a **custom mural** that will celebrate PAWS' mission and include the winner's pets painted on the wall of the PAWS Medical Center by internationally renowned muralist Jeff Zimmermann (**sold for \$50,000**); a pet portrait on the **PAWS Rescue Van (sold for \$8,000)**; and the chance to have your pet appear on the cover of the **2021 PAWS desktop calendar (sold for \$12,000)**.

PAWS founder Paula Fasseas welcomed the crowd and thanked presenting sponsors A. Marek Fine Jewelry, Workstorm and The Drake Hotel. She said, "We founded PAWS Chicago in 1997 because my daughter Alexis and I saw firsthand the senseless killing of homeless pets in Chicago. Innocent animals were dying by the tens of thousands each year in our city. Not because they were too sick or too old or in too much pain. They were dying because there were too many and because no one knew. We started PAWS Chicago to tell their story. Now we're at the doorstep of a No Kill Chicago."

Since the organization's founding, PAWS has helped reduce the number of homeless pets killed in the city by 91%. In October, PAWS opened a community outreach center in Englewood that will expand its spay/neuter and veterinary services further into communities where pet overpopulation remains problematic.