

The Patriot Ledger

Gone to the dogs in Marshfield

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MARSHFIELD —August is often called the dog days of summer, and Monday it was quite literally a dog day at the Marshfield Fair, with the 4-H Dog Achievement show taking place, as well as a “Meet the Breeds” event.

Achievement is a multi-part competition that members of 4-H can partake in with many different animals, not just dogs. First, competitors take a knowledge test about the animal, as well as make an educational poster. They also submit the records they have been keeping about their individual animal and participate in a clean-up day at the fair.

Monday was the dog show portion of the competition, which begins with participants judging other dogs in fitting, which is an assessment of the animal’s cleanliness, health and physical appearance. A judge is also scoring these dogs so that the competitors can compare the scores they gave the animals, with the goal of giving the same scores as the judge. The competitors then are judged as they compete in fitting with their own dogs before ending with showmanship, which

is an assessment of how well the participants are showing their dog breed and the dog's best attributes. Competitors earn points in each segment of the competition, and the winner is the person with the most points.

Monday's contest saw five handlers competing with a variety of dog breeds, including one Schnauzer, one Siberian Husky and one Coton de Tulear. A Labrador Retriever won both the fitting and showmanship portions of the event.

Cathy Acampora took part in the competition with her Collie, Princess Merida, by having her judged by the competitors in fitting. Acampora is a member of the 4-H dog club "A Round of Apaws," and has been involved with 4-H since her daughter was younger.

"I got into it because of my daughter, and she's graduated from college, and I'm still here," said Acampora, "This program is so good for kids."

The 4-H dog program meets once a week, which is more often than most other animal clubs, which meet monthly. The dogs are trained, cared for and shown by the person competing with them.

"It's a commitment," Acampora said, "But they love it. They love their dogs."

Contestants all shared one thing in common: they enjoy being with their dogs as well as their friends in 4-H.

"I wanted to compete in Dog Achievement because it's another chance to show him and spend time with him, and I get to see my friends," said Caleigh Brown, a 13-year-old from Attleboro in her fifth year with 4-H, who was competing with her Bernese Mountain Dog, Teddy, "My favorite part is doing showmanship because he gets really excited."

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