

The 42nd Annual Birmingham Youth Assistance Kids' Dog Show

By Alen Ter-Azaryan:

About BYA

The Birmingham Youth Assistance (BYA) is a **community-based program** dedicated to supporting youth and families in the Birmingham, Michigan area. Established and operated by local volunteers, BYA works to **prevent juvenile delinquency, child abuse, and neglect** by providing **counseling, mentorship, and family support programs**.

Unlike others, BYA is the only local organization offering these services to children 17 and younger, accepting referrals from schools, law enforcement, the Oakland County Circuit Court Family Division, and concerned parents. Families within areas served by the Birmingham Public School District can access a variety of programs, including family education, mentoring through the Mentors Plus program, summer camp scholarships, and community recognition events like the Youth in Service program.

BYA also hosts annual family-friendly events such as Breakfast with Santa, the Kids' Dog Show, and Touch A Truck. Funding for these initiatives comes from partnerships with Birmingham Public Schools, the City of Birmingham, the Villages of Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Franklin, grants, and local fundraising efforts. Volunteers are very important to BYA's success, so make sure to view their website for volunteer opportunities.

About the Kids' Dog Show

The Birmingham Youth Assistance has an annual dog show, usually on the first or second Sunday of February. This year, the categories are **Best Dog Costume Competition, Waggiest Tail Competition, Best Trick Competition, The Musical Sit Game, and the Best Looking Dog Competition**, as well as some other activities, like the **Learning about Comfort Dogs, Obedience Training**, and the coveted **Pick of the Litter Prize Drawing**.

This year, the judges were **Curt Lawson**, the Chief of Police of Franklin and Bingham Farms, and **The Honorable Therese Longe, who is the Mayor of the City of Birmingham**. Additionally, **Ann Nazareth Manning**, who is the Chair of BYA who filled in **Mike Palmer's** (the owner of Premier Pet Supply) spot, Pam Roehr, from Southern Michigan Obedience Training Club who has been a judge for 30 years since 1995, and **Arno Ter-Azaryan**, a BYA Youth in Service Honoree who is an 8th grade student at Berkshire Middle School.

Emceeding the event for the 12th year, was **Jason Clinkscale**, the principal of Berkshire Middle School, and **DJ Ross**, who has been playing music for the event for multiple years.

The sponsors this year were **Premier Pet Supply, Mills Pharmacy, Bloom Pediatrics, Southern Michigan Obedience Training Club, Beverly Hills Veterinary**, and **Fluff & Tuff**

Organizers

Although it was mainly a group effort, **Jason Clinkscale, Ann Nazareth-Manning, Meg Lopé**, and **Erin Payton** mostly contributed to the event.

Jason Clinkscale describes the reason why he came back for a 12th time was that the “BYA really helps our community” and” I [He] just love[s] dogs!” He agreed to host it the year that he became principal. He has two dogs, one of which won first place for “Waggiest Tail” several years ago.

Ann Nazareth Manning is the Chair of the Birmingham Youth Assistance. She first joined after a friend recommended her to sit in at a meeting, then she “fell in love with the mission” and slowly worked her way up to president. She has a dog named Henry. She described the event as “happy and upbeat” and loved it because “some students get recognized for sports, others for academics, but at the dog show, more and new people get recognized.”

Meg Lopé is the Co-Chair of the Kids’ Dog Show which planned the event. She says that the Kids’ Dog Show is her favorite BYA event. She says she keeps coming back because it “really brings the community together” and “the kids and the dogs (I [she] think[s]) have fun.” She has three “wonderful” Labradoodles and is planning on getting a new one.

Erin Payton is the Co-Chair of the Kids’ Dog Show Committee. She combines her love for animals with her passion for helping kids by organizing the show. She plays a key role in planning the event, making sure that kids have fun while learning responsibility and teamwork. “Helping organize an event that celebrates the special bond between children and their dogs is incredibly rewarding,” Erin says. She “loves creating memories” for both kids and animals.

Winners

Best Dog Costume: Alexis, who is currently 10 years old, has been competing with her labradoodle **Baby** for six years and has won “**Best Dog Costume**”. She and her dog, Randy, dressed up as a Lions fan and an actual lion, respectively. She got the idea for the costume when the Lions almost qualified for the Super Bowl. Although the Lions lost to the Commanders, she described it as “our Super Bowl.”

Waggiest Tail: Scarlett, who is eight years old and is our youngest winner, won the waggiest tail competition with her dog **Ryder**. She describes that her dog is “really happy and we give him support and really good things. He’s really happy” She said she had “so much fun” and will definitely do it next year.

Best Trick: Sarah, who is 13, won “Best Trick” with her Border Collie Poodle Charlie, who is 4. It is her third year competing. Charlie jumped through a hoop, through Sarah’s legs, and then on her back. She describes her training as “practice and time”. She plans on coming next year.

Musical Sit: Owen won musical sit with **Benny**, who is a two-year-old Bernadoodle. After 12 rounds of musical sit, played by of course DJ Ross, they won the prize. Owen said it was his first time winning and his second time competing and will “definitely go to the dog show next year.”

Best Looking: Marie, who is 12, won best looking with her three-year-old dog **Lucy** who was dressed in a tutu. After many dogs competed for the title, they emerged victorious. She wants to thank her parents for helping her take care of Lucy.

Best in Show: Sarah won both Best in Show and Best Trick. She said that she feels “really good” and is going to buy dog toys for her dog, **Charlie** as a reward for doing so well.

Other BYA Events

If you would like to participate in BYA events, make sure to sign up on their website (if it requires a sign-up) or just show up! Events through the program are **Breakfast with Santa, Farmer’s Market, Youth-in-Service, and Touch a Truck.** Find out more on their website.