The Show Must Go On!

Thinking Outside the Box with the Great Dane Club of Arizona

In the world of dog shows, adaptability and resilience are essential traits, as the Great Dane Club of Arizona demonstrated during their recent specialty show, held on February 8 and 9, 2025. Just three weeks before the event, the club faced an unexpected challenge when their planned venue, Royal Arabians Farm in Mesa, AZ, became unavailable due to the need to shelter displaced horses from the California fires. This last-minute change could have spelled disaster for the club, but instead, it became an opportunity to showcase their teamwork and commitment to the breed.

A Race Against Time

After learning about the venue change in January, club President Stephen Leblanc quickly mobilized the Board members to explore 15 alternative locations. Unfortunately, none were available on such short notice. It was then that Club Treasurer Kathy Munyan brought forth a bold idea: to host the show on the property of fellow club members Pam Koeper and Karen Burkhart. Recognizing the importance of holding the show, Pam and Karen agreed, stating, "If we didn't hold it here, we would have to cancel this year's show."

On January 16, 2025, the Board made the final decision to move the location, and the club swiftly informed the American Kennel Club (AKC), receiving instant approval. With only three weeks to prepare, the team rallied to tackle the logistics of the new venue, ensuring everything was in place for the big day.

Overcoming Challenges

The new site required careful planning for the ring, parking for cars and motorhomes, and access routes. Pam and Karen decided that an irrigation road would be the best entry point, but it needed some tree trimming due to low-hanging branches. Additionally, a dead cottonwood tree posed a safety hazard, so a club member from the fire department oversaw its removal. With the help of seven other members wielding chainsaws, the tree was safely taken down, and Gary and Sharon Sturm generously offered to haul away the debris.

Carlos Hernandez took charge of parking logistics, marking spots on the Thursday before the show and arriving early on the day of the event to assist attendees. The collaborative spirit among club members was palpable; as Pam put it, "We knew the club members we were dealing with and the type of people they are. We knew that we didn't stand alone in this project."

A Community Effort
The response from club members and the broader community was overwhelming. As news of the venue change spread, many reached out to offer their assistance. After the show, Pam happily reported, "The grounds were spotless; everyone picked up." This sense of camaraderie and support was a hallmark of the event.

The show's success was not solely about logistics; it was also about creating a welcoming and enjoyable atmosphere. The intimate setting allowed for closer
interaction among participants, fostering conversations, laughter, and a shared love for the Great Dane breed.

A Memorable Experience
Georgia Hymmen, an attendee, reflected on her experience: "The day I attended was perfect….not too hot, not too cold. I was amazed at how well the club and its members pulled through to deal with a last-minute venue change. I think it worked out perfectly and was a testament to their teamwork!" The club provided daily lunches, with pizza being a highlight, and the raffle featured enticing prizes, including a lovely Dane quilt.

Jamie Harshfield, GDCA club president, echoed these sentiments, noting, "The unfortunate circumstances that drove the club to change locations resulted in such a positive environment for exhibitors, judges, and spectators." He emphasized that the slower pace of the show allowed for meaningful interactions, reminding everyone why they love showing dogs.

Looking to the Future
When asked if they would be willing to host again, Pam and Karen responded enthusiastically, "You bet!" Their willingness to embrace challenges reflects a broader truth in the dog show world: as the sport faces various challenges, thinking outside the box will be crucial for its survival.

The Great Dane Club of Arizona's experience serves as an inspiring example of how determination, teamwork, and creativity can turn obstacles into opportunities. Their successful show not only showcased beautiful dogs but also reinforced the strength of community and the spirit of adaptability. Well done, Great Dane Club of Arizona!