

Lines from Linda

BY LINDA AYERS TURNER KNORR

Stars of Tomorrow - The Pee Wees



When Kris Harner, Show Chairman of the Greenville Kennel Club, applied for our club to host its very first Pee Wee event she was excited but not exactly sure what to expect. Avery Clute, daughter of Jamie Clute, is our only club member with a child whose age fits the five to nine year category. Our past president, Ken Walker, and his wife, Debbie's grandson, Christian Wall,

would be a sure one we could count on too. So, at least we knew we could look forward to watching Avery Clute and Christian Wall participate in our first exciting Pee Wee event!

The Fabulous Pat Hastings was on our judging panel and, luckily, her schedule would allow her to be our judge. I can think of no better mentor for the youngsters. We were on our way! I volunteered to put together the gift bags for the children. Oh, what fun that was because it seems like only yesterday that I first entered the show ring at the age of six. Don't we love to reminisce.

Alamaza Kroeshel helped me fill our large totes with a dog bowl and more goodies than you can imagine from AKC and our generous sponsor Purina. Purina even included a new grooming bag for each young handler. Wow! The children would be going home with loads of gifts and information to encourage them to participate in all of the many activities our American Kennel Club has to offer. I was thrilled to see some youngsters wearing AKC bandanas before the day was out.

As the morning progressed, twelve youngsters from four Southern states signed up to participate: Annaliesa Yoshida, Fletcher, North Carolina; Laney Oliver, Greer, South Carolina; Christian Wall, Pelzer, South Carolina; Eva Stielow, Greenville, South Carolina; Jenna Yoder, Fairplay, South Carolina; brother and sister Grayson and Annalee Milan, Lakeland, Florida; sisters Ansley Smith and Kayla Smith, Rome, Georgia; Avery Clute, Williamston, South Carolina; Lexi Keel, Inman, South Carolina and Morgan Kelley, Denton, South Carolina. Adults could learn lessons about proper attire from our Pee Wees. Each young handler was impressively dressed!

Their exhibits were large and small. Breeds represented were Great Pyrenees, Doberman Pinscher, Labrador Retriever, All American Canine Partner, Cardigan Welsh Corgi, Pug, Border Collie and Havanese. I invited my neighbor, five-year-old Eva Stielow and her All-American Canine Partner, "Honey." Eva had never been to a dog show. Eva is now enrolled in our Canine Partner program and is hooked on participating in AKC events!

According to Alan Slay Director of AKC Event Programs, "There were 55 Pee Wee events offered in 2016 and they averaged five participants. In 2017, 88 have been offered or scheduled averaging seven participants. Clubs report that they have had a very good experience with this special attraction and intend to continue offering it. Those clubs are providing a welcoming and memorable experience for both the children and their families."

Following their appearances when the Pee Wees gathered for photos with Pat Hastings, a few youngsters had already rushed over to the "After Party." The Greenville Kennel Club ladies were passing out refreshments much to the delight of the kids who were full of conversation about their new experience.

Our club was blessed to have Christine Weisse and Barbara Ohmann with the AKC Booth just in front of the ring. Barbara, AKC Director of Club Education perhaps summed it up best, "Your Pee Wee Competition was definitely one of the best ones I have seen so far. Pat Hastings as judge was amazing in her ability to work with the kids and dogs. The Little Boys in their suits and bowties were adorable. The little Southern Debutants in their dresses and jewels were a sight to behold. And then the event began. The dog show audience and families around the ring were supportive and proud



Original Pee Wee, 1952
Author Linda Ayers and Ch. Conrad's Sweet Expression, "Pam"

LINES FROM LINDA: Stars of Tomorrow: The Pee Wees

of each child and their dogs. So many great moments—I loved the little five-year-old bow tied boy who ran out of the ring yelling at the top of his lungs to grandmother, *MIMI I WONNED!!!* Wonderful job Greenville Kennel Club.”

To the sounds of thunderous applause every young handler rounded the ring with their dogs under control. What a sight it was to see! Cameras were flashing and tears were flowing.

These are our Stars of Tomorrow! ■

