



A Big Hit in the Big Apple – by Toni Pawson

What better way to spend a cold Winter Day in New York City then to Host the Staffordshire Bull Terrier booth at the American Kennel Club (AKC) Meet the Breeds. This event has become a tradition for me and I truly enjoy doing it every year. If you aren't familiar with this event, I highly suggest you spend a day and get to meet over 160 different breeds under one roof sponsored by the AKC if one is available near your hometown.

Each breed is assigned a booth, to welcome the public showcasing their breeds with history, health information, photos, and volunteers handy to answer any questions people have. Breed booths are typically decorated with themes that associate the breed's history, country of origin, or what that particular breed is bred for. Each year I try to think of a theme and decorate the booth accordingly. Since this event is on or

around Valentine's Day, I like to use the word "love" with the theme.

A very cold morning, I headed to New York City from Long Island, with a full carload of everything red, even a red puppy. I was greeted by some volunteers to help me set up the booth. Usually I am very organized, that was not the case this year. As we finished decorating the booth, we were already gaining attention from the public just as the doors opened for the day.

Usually the volunteers that come to help are local to the area. I was thrilled to hear that some friends from all over the country would be in town for Westminster Dog Show and wanted to help in the booth. Excited to see some familiar faces and meet some new Stafford owners as we all pitched in to promote our breed.



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During the planning process for this event, I decided to incorporate a little bit of “England” in the booth. Some flags, an English Telephone Booth prop, and a British Guard was the finishing touches to the booth this year. Huge thanks going out to Jim Caswell as he so graciously agreed to wear the costume and play along for our booth visitors. I thought I was going to have to beg Jim but he stepped up and played along, I think he had a great time too.

Lynn Caswell came up with the idea of volunteers wearing matching shirts so we were easily recognized for the public. A section designated for puppies is always a huge hit. Three puppies from my recent litter reunited and spent the day with their owners having fun and loving all the hugs and kisses from children to adults.

Events like these promoting positives of the breed are so very important. I highly recommend anyone interested in purchasing a Staffordshire Bull Terrier try to attend one of these events to talk to owners and breeders. It is also so interesting to speak to people that have never seen or heard of our breed, and then to watch them walk away smiling and loving all the dogs they just met. I always enjoy walking around when time permits to see the different breeds, talk to some of the vendors, and watch some of the different demonstrations.

It is a fun weekend that extends to Monday and Tuesday with the Westminster Dog Show. Staffords are typically showing on Tuesday so out of town visitors get a chance to do some New York City sightseeing. If you plan

on visiting New York City next year, stop by the breed booth and meet some amazing people, and some great dogs. Huge thanks to everyone that attended and helped, once again, Staffords were a BIG hit in the Big Apple.





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