



RESCUE HERO'S STORY ABOUT NIKKI

[read more>](#)

Dog Tips

Never leave your dog unsupervised near a swimming pool, since even adept doggy paddlers often have difficulty exiting pools.

[read more>](#)

TOTAL HEALTH | NUTRITIOUS DISH | HAPPY HOUND | CANINE CONDUCT | DOG BLOG

[HAPPY HOUND](#) | [PLAY](#)

The Benefits of Joining a Dog Social Group

By Kim Boatman

[+](#) [f](#) [t](#) [+](#) [0](#) [f](#) Like



Across the country, dog social groups are enabling dog owners and their pets to find common ground. Dog-centric social groups provide both with an outlet for relaxation, shared fun and a source of information and support. Groups gather in dog parks and pet boutiques, or meet for activities (e.g., hikes or days at the beach).

Calendar-worthy Special Events

Janene Zakrajsek, owner of [Pussy & Pooch](#) pet boutiques in Los Angeles and Long Beach, Calif., says her Mutt Mingles are "our version of a 'Yappy Hour' for all." Pussy & Pooch has been holding Mutt Mingles for almost five years, and the store works to make the events special for both dog and human participants. Mingles have included a tea party to celebrate International Dog Biscuit Appreciation Day, an Earth Day Bark for Green party and an Oktoberfest Dog Beer & Sausage-Fest.

"Minglers enjoy the freedom of letting their little ones run around the store leash-free for some much-needed pup playtime," explains Zakrajsek. "Naturally, our guests also enjoy the refreshment, raffles, Pawbar tastings (at the store's pet cafe), and other fun we create for them."

Regular Playdates, Thanks to Facebook

While attending Mutt Mingles is like having a date night with your dog, other dog-oriented social groups meet on a more casual basis. "I belong to a group of dog owners who meet at the dog park daily," says Kimberly Gauthier, a Seattle blogger/photographer. "We have a group on Facebook and check in throughout the day to see who's going to the park and when. What I find hilarious is that we identify each other by our dogs' names. We know all the dogs and their personalities."

Using a social networking site strengthens the group's connections, explains Gauthier. Facebook allows the group to easily set schedules, to make plans outside of their dog park encounters and to keep up-to-date on potential issues. "One dog was diagnosed with kennel cough, and we were all informed immediately," she says.

Ask the Right Questions, Do Your Homework

If you plan to either join or start a canine social group, it's important to consider several factors and to take a few precautions, say social group coordinators and participants. This checklist should help:

- **Put safety first.** "If you're joining someone else's group, you want to know if they screen for dogs being up-to-date on shots, aggressive tendencies and more," advises Janice Costa, who manages the 145-member The Canine Club Meetup Group in New York City and runs the dog vacation business [Canine Camp Getaway](#). "You want to know if the group leader has any formal experience working with dogs, if he or she has ever broken up a dog fight, how they handle behavioral problems."
- **Know or set parameters.** Will the group mix dogs of various sizes? Is the event on- or off-leash? How many dogs will attend? Costa limits off-leash events to a manageable 12 to 15 dogs and keeps activities to just a few hours.

Search

Follow Us

@pandy_j When it comes to nutrition, check with your vet to make sure you learn about your dog's specific needs!
[less than a minute ago](#)

From Our Sponsor

IAMS Premium Protection

THE MOST ADVANCED IAMS NUTRITION. EVER.

[FIND OUT WHY](#)

VIDEOS

- Commands with Steve Dale
[watch video>>](#)
- Teeth Brushing with Steve Dale
[watch video>>](#)
- Coat Brushing with Steve Dale
[watch video>>](#)
- Travels with Dr. Gregg Takashima
[watch video>>](#)
- Aggression with Dr. Jackie Nielson
[watch video>>](#)

SPONSOR VIDEOS

- What to do when bringing home a new puppy
[watch video>>](#)
- Your puppy's first veterinary visit
[watch video>>](#)
- The best food for your puppy
[watch video>>](#)
- How to choose a puppy that's right for your family
[watch video>>](#)

DOG QUIZ

In 2003, a canine named Augie broke the world's record for the most tennis balls held in the mouth by a dog.

- **Consider your focus.** Whether you're joining a group or starting one, the activities should suit you and your dog. If you and your dog are couch potatoes, then an energetic dog/owner hiking club isn't for you.
- **Think about doing good.** Often, canine-focused social groups enjoy supporting dog-related causes. Kate Singleton, who founded the San Francisco Chihuahua Meetup in 2007, and her fellow Chihuahua owners use their meetup to address the problem of homeless dogs. "We have had lots of dogs adopted via the meetup, and many of the members, including me, have started fostering," she says. "We often will have raffles to raise dollars for rescue groups or to help our group with Meetup.com fees."
- **Be consistent.** "Our group works because the people like the consistency," says Singleton.

Most important of all, you and your dog should enjoy the experience. "The exercise and socialization in a safe and pleasant atmosphere is the key," says Zakrajsek.

Kim Boatman is a journalist based in Northern California. She is also the managing editor of ExceptionalCanine.com. Boatman's work has appeared in The Miami Herald, the Detroit Free Press and the San Jose Mercury News. She is a lifelong lover of animals, and a frequent contributor to The Dog Daily.



You might like:



Dogs on Holiday
(The Dog Daily)



Do Dogs Ever Feel Guilty?
(The Dog Daily)



6 Ways to Keep Your Dog Healthy in 2012
(The Dog Daily)

Rate This Article

☆☆☆☆☆ Click a star to rate this article

Comments

Post a comment

Your Name:

Message: Comment

There are no comments at this time. Please come back soon

In the month by a dog, Augie managed to hold this many balls at the same time:

- Four
- Five
- Six

[answer >>](#)

[TOTAL HEALTH](#) | [NUTRITIOUS DISH](#) | [HAPPY HOUND](#) | [CANINE CONDUCT](#) | [DOG BLOG](#)

[Leave Feedback](#)

[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#)

StudioOne
NETWORKS

Copyright © 2012 Studio One Networks. All rights reserved