



It's a Totally Different Breed of Mardi Gras Celebration Every Dog Will Have Its Day on March 10, at the 25th Annual Mardi Paws Parade

Mandeville, Louisiana (January 29, 2019) – Just when you didn't think it was **paws**-ible for Mardi Gras to be any more fun comes this announcement about the 25th annual [“Mardi Paws” Parade](#), a totally dif-**fur**-ent sort of event designed especially for dogs and their people. The parade always takes place on the Sunday after Mardi Gras – this year that's March 10 – on the lakefront in Mandeville, Louisiana, just across Lake Pontchartrain from New Orleans. It's generally agreed that Mardi Paws, which rolls at 2 p.m., is **paws**itively the happiest, **yappiest** event of the entire Carnival season.

This year's theme is “SuperPaws,” and the lakefront will be transformed into a **paw**-some “Bark a Con” that celebrates everything about comic book culture. Four-legged participants must be in costume, and parade organizers will **pet**-entially see everything from superheroes to wizards, space warriors to zombies. Each dog must be dressed in a **fetching** costume that reflects this theme, and floats can be made of wagons, yard carts, baby strollers, shopping carts ... nearly any non-motorized, wheeled object can work. Judges will award prizes in a variety of categories, and some lucky **pups** will take home the coveted Poop Trophies.

Canines interested in participating should **hound** their human to pre-register at www.MardiPaws.com, though they can also sign up on site on March 10. There's a \$25 registration fee per **pooch**, and up to six humans can accompany their **adog**able companion. Human escorts are encouraged to dress to suit the theme, too, and are asked to double as the parade's official “**pooper scoopers**” to ensure that the parade route remains **doody**-free and enjoyable for participants and spectators alike.

Those spectators go totally **mutts** over Mardi Paws' throws, which include the traditional cups, doubloons and beads used by so many other parades, but also stuffed animals (beware of

flying cats, folks!) and the royal court's famed gold and glittered **dog poops** (they're fake, of course!).

The parade's king and queen have interesting – and inspirational – **tails** to share. King Otis was rescued about four years ago just outside of New Orleans, when he was just a puppy found with his snout glued, wired and roped shut with electrical cord; a cloth tied tightly around his neck; and broken bones in his front leg. The rescuing officers suspected he was being weakened to be a bait dog in a dog-fighting ring and that he somehow managed to escape. Today he's happily and safely living with a family in Covington, Louisiana, with a human mom, dad, brother and sister and two dog siblings. He loves his blanket and taking rides in the car.

Also in 2015, Queen Allison was put up for adoption when her former owner went into hospice care and the owner's family didn't want to care for the dog. She got a totally new **leash** on life when her current dad saw her on online adoption site, got in his truck with his other rescue dog – a fellow Cavalier King Charles spaniel named Theodore – and drove all the way to Kansas to claim her so she didn't have to endure a flight. These days 9-year-old Allison is very happy at her home in Louisiana, and Theodore is her very best friend.

Mardi Paws is held to benefit and entertain canines and kids; representing the kids this year is the parade's grand marshal, 10-year-old Audrey Nethery, an internet and social media sensation whom viewers might recognize from her appearances on the “Rachael Ray” show. Shortly after she was born, Audrey was diagnosed with an incredibly rare bone-marrow disorder called “Diamond-Blackfan anemia”; she just released a cookbook to raise awareness about the condition. Despite multiple blood transfusions and heavy medication, Audrey is known for her high energy, as exhibited in a now-famous viral video in which she shows off her Zumba skills. She'll bring that enthusiasm to the parade route and will likely **bow-wow** the crowd. Audrey has her own dog, Leo, plus a few cats.

Sometimes **puparazzi** gather for Mardi Paws because there's also a fun **Pawllywood** connection to this event. Proceeds from the parade benefit both canines and kids through the [Ian Somerhalder Foundation](#) (ISF), the brainchild of actor Ian Somerhalder of the television shows and “Lost” and “The Vampire Diaries.” His latest project, a 10-episode series for Netflix called “V-Wars,” also features vampires. This time, though, Somerhalder plays a human, Dr. Luther Swann, who's pitted against his best friend ... who happens to have become a powerful vampire leader. This year's parade theme is the perfect complement to the new series.

An ardent animal lover who grew up in neighboring Covington, Louisiana, Somerhalder has purchased 100 acres of land near Mandeville. About 70 of those acres will be set aside to preserve

the bayou; the remaining 30 will support **pet** projects that serve the needs of animals, youth and the community at large. Somerhalder worked like a **dog** to create his namesake foundation, which empowers, educates and collaborates with people and organizations that have a **pawsitive** impact on the planet and all its creatures. [Scott's Wish](#), which provides aid for patients with leukemia and life-threatening illnesses, is the other beneficiary of Mardi Paws events.

For more information about the parade or to pre-register, please visit www.MardiPaws.com.

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