



# A Howlin' Good Time

## River Park Off-leash News

September  2010

### UPCOMING STUFF

#### NEW OFF-LEASH GROUP



Several representatives met on August 25 to form a city-wide off-leash group.

Details are still being finalized. Watch for more information about how to get involved.

### CLASSIFIEDS

Please see a separate notice sent with this month's off-leash newsletter. It contains the following information:

#### LOST DOGS

**Thor** - a 10 month old Husky missing since Aug 23

**Jimmie** - a German Shepherd cross missing since Aug 26 was found on Aug 31

**Pet-friendly Home for Rent**  
Fully renovated Marda Loop home available Sept 1

**Dog Needs a New Home**  
**Hobo**, a sweet Husky cross is looking for new digs.

Please feel free to share this newsletter with friends. If at any time you no longer wish to receive communication, just let me know.

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## River Park, Sandy Beach, Britannia Slope Update

Maintenance protocol in Calgary parks has recently changed. Park volunteers used to communicate needs to City staff. With the new system, requests are made by calling 3-1-1. I have found varying or few results so I have been asking others to call en masse. The new system has shown to be inefficient.

Here's an update on some park matters. Various items listed are a combination of results from emails to Parks and various calls made to 3-1-1.

#### Cat Margetts Memorial Site

Cat's mother tried to get a dead tree removed from the memorial site but was told concerned park users had to complain. Thanks to your response the tree is gone. Virginia from The City's Urban Forestry department said a new tree has been ordered, the area will be prepared in fall, and planting will occur next spring.

#### Water by the Parking Lot

A few of us concerned about the pool of water near the River Park parking lot called 3-1-1. On August 13, The City tried pumping and redirecting water away from the area. The French drain located beneath the gravel continually proves to be problematic. It was installed two years ago and unsuccessfully repaired twice.

#### Sandy Beach Parking Lot

Cement blocks have been installed as markers to maximize space opportunities in Sandy Beach's largest parking lot.

#### Dead Trees in River Park

At the beginning of August, someone reported 23 dead trees. Two days later, several trees were removed, including five near the pooling water close to the parking lot. Sadly, some still remain.

#### Gravel Alongside River Park's Trail

I still have no answers about the gravel mess alongside the trail that was made by City staff last November.

#### Port-a-Potty

The port-a potty at the south end of River Park has appeared and disappeared over the years. Parks reps report they do not own or manage them. Apparently they are usually requested and paid for by user groups (with Parks permission) and removed once the contract ends.

Are these and other recent changes considered regular maintenance or a response to 3-1-1 complaints? Oddly some of these projects fell under the management and development plan for the park. Hopefully The City is not implementing change without notice or consultation.

## Clean-up Effort / Dog Waste Bag Fundraiser

A huge thank you to everyone for your efforts at the August 21 River Park event. For the first time, the Friends of River Park leadership team combined a clean-up with a dog waste bag fundraiser.

**Kate** led 59 dog owners in the clean up of garbage, cigarette butts and feces.

**Colleen, Patty, Linda and Candice** along with **Maureen**, a guest volunteer, registered people for the clean-up and collected bag donations. People brought cheques payable to the printing company to our south table and Maureen and Linda fundraised by the fountain.

Donations reached \$1535 during the three-hour event! And donations continued until publishing of this newsletter. We raised \$2395.75 as of August 29. Leadership team members topped up the amount to \$2604.66 which will enable the Friends of River Park to purchase 150,000 biodegradable dog waste bags.

Thanks very much for this incredible commitment to maintaining our beloved River Park.



Linda & Maureen

## A Fact-finding Mission in Sandy Beach

After receiving recognition in the Calgary Herald for our efforts to maintain cleanliness in River Park and Sandy Beach, there was an unfavourable comment toward dog owners listed in the blog. The writer said Sandy Beach was riddled with dog feces.

During my vacation, I checked out Sandy Beach and the Britannia side. It was Monday, August 16 between 10:30am and noon. I only found eight poops, a few cigarette butts, six pieces of garbage, one discarded raft and some broken glass.

It was quiet except for four families enjoying the people-only area on the west side. On the east side, several people with well-behaved dogs were enjoying the designated off-leash space.

All people I spoke with said dog owners are pretty good about picking up. I

spoke to two professional dog walkers, Angela and Darren, who said they clean up each day after various user groups as they walk the dogs in their care. They note Sandy Beach is usually messy after a weekend. While following them on their route, we were pleased to report finding almost no litter or feces.

As many of you know, I attend various meetings regarding the park. Competing interest groups are often quite vocal about inconsiderate park use and dog owners are usually a target for unfavourable remarks.

This recent fact-finding visit to Sandy Beach and many others I have done, haven't shown me there's a problem.

Maybe some vocal people within competing interest groups are just stirring the pot. Or as my mother and father would have said, "Some people haven't been taught to share properly."

## If Dogs Could Vote...



Off-leash space issues just might be at the top of dog owners' priority lists with respect to the upcoming election.

The City lists 138 off-leash parks in Calgary, but most of us know that the majority of them are not useable by dogs or people. All but one are unfenced, many are unsafe and several are simply unpleasant. Several times without notice or consultation, many spaces have been reduced or taken away completely.

Have you researched the candidates' positions on off-leash parks?

Do your homework. Talk to the aldermanic and mayoral candidates. The people we vote in will have an affect on our daily recreation. Make an informed decision on October 18. Our dogs are counting on us.

## With our Thanks

Steve and I would like to acknowledge the incredible care and concern we received when Kelpie passed away.

Supporters include friends, family, River Park people, and the Marda Loop Veterinary Centre veterinarians, technicians and administration staff.

Among the various acts of kindness we received, someone anonymously gifted us with an appointment to speak to an animal communicator. Steve and I are touched and sincerely appreciate this kind and thoughtful offer but we will not redeem it. We are totally at peace with our decision to let Kelpie go. We have no doubts or unanswered questions and we believe Kelpie has seamlessly moved on to her next life. Thank you.

Grieving is always a personal journey. With each step of the way, our hearts continue to be gently cradled in the arms of the River Park family.

Thank you to all. Steve and I will always remember your thoughtful and kind support.



Candice, Steve, Kelpie & Sirra

## A Fond Farewell to Two River Park Dogs



On July 21, Valerie and Bradley said a sad farewell to **Newman**, their wonderful family member for the last three years.

Newman passed away unexpectedly as a result of toxin build-up from an intestinal infection.

Valerie wrote: *"We adopted Newman and his buddy, Jerry from Cabos San Lucas, Mexico. Newman was born with cataracts and had one disjointed leg. Despite his health challenges, he had the most loving and beautiful personality.*

*When Newman snuggled up to anyone, he could never get enough lovin'. If you stopped petting him, he would give you 'the paw' to remind you that you had taken a break. Newman would go crazy with excitement whenever we came home or at the sound of picking up his leash. He loved his walks and wandering off into the bushes to explore at River Park. Newman was such an easy dog to love. We miss him lots, but feel blessed that he came into our lives to be our friend and family member.*

*Thank you Newman for being the best dog ever!"*

Another long-time dog member of River Park has passed away at 12 years old. **Dakota** developed bloat on August 13 while vacationing at his family's cabin.

Dakota was a gentle, happy Golden Retriever that enjoyed countless walks at River Park since he was a puppy. Many of us will remember how he played fetch endlessly and proudly carried his toy in the park.

Dakota was a wonderful role model for two brothers during his lifetime. He taught Canyon and Dempsey to be well-adjusted dogs and exemplary members of the off-leash community.

Dakota will be sadly missed by his family as well as many River Park people and doggy friends.



Kevin, Richard, Canyon, Dempsey and Dakota