

## Handling the dog show crowd



*Vikki, a 19-month-old great Dane, gets a pat from her owner, George Priestman, of Tiverton. Photo by Jack Foley*

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By Deborah Allard, GateHouse News Service  
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TIVERTON - There are dogs being brushed and fluffed from coast to coast as their owners get ready to show them at the Bay Colony Cluster Dog Show in Boston from Dec. 6 to 9.

George Priestman, owner of three Great Danes, has the task of organizing everything that everyone needs while they're in town, from transportation to lunch. And, with 155 breeds shooting for their chance at stardom, some 1,500 exhibitors will show an average of 2,500 pedigree pooches as they compete each day for best in breed and best in show.

"I kind of enjoy the hospitality," Priestman said. "I like to arrange things. It comes natural to me."

Priestman, a transportation consultant for Total Logistix in Sparta, N.J., works from home in Tiverton, which gives him the time and experience to organize such an event. He's also setting up plans for a banquet at the Marriot on Dec. 8.

The Bay Colony Cluster Dog Show, one of the country's largest American Kennel Club dog events, is organized and run by volunteers from three dog clubs: the Eastern Dog Club, of which Priestman is a member, and the Ladies' and Middlesex County Dog clubs.

Dog exhibitors are flying in from all over the country. "There's one dog who flies around in a corporate jet," Priestman said. Some of the dogs will be put up in hotels with their masters. Others will be penned. "The dogs are treated extremely well," Priestman said. "It's the true life of Riley."

Judges are coming from as far as France, Uruguay and Australia for the show. And, vendors are plentiful and from everywhere.

Priestman, who is not showing a dog in this show because he is handling the hospitality, said that showing and breeding dogs for he and his wife, Heidi, "the brains of the operation," is a hobby, not for profit.

His Great Danes, Lola, 10, Ramseys, 5 and Vikki, 19 months, have all competed and taken home ribbons from various shows. One of Lola's puppies was a champ, ranked number 3 nationwide. Although very large — Ramseys weighs 170 pounds — the breed is known as the "gentle giant" of the dog world. "Cream-puffs," Priestman called them. "(Ramseys) wants to be in your lap all the time," Priestman said.

When at home and not competing for his lap, they're in their kennel, a large wooden structure where they can get out of the weather. They can also run outside in a walled-in area. Even still, Priestman said: "They're in the house in the winter. They're short-haired dogs." They obviously get the treatment. A basket of large, stuffed dog toys was prominently placed within doggie reach in the kitchen. Priestman has had up to five adult Great Danes at one time, and eight puppies. Their life expectancy is about 8-years because of their various health issues, like heart problems. "We're trying to improve them as a breed," Priestman said.

Dog lovers who are interested in any breed of dog are urged to attend the show, Priestman said. "They can talk to the breeders." The Bay Colony Cluster Dog Show will start with the Middlesex County Kennel Club on Thursday. The Ladies' Dog Club will compete Friday. And, the Eastern Dog Club will compete Saturday and Sunday. Each show starts with Best of Breed at 8 a.m., and ends with Best in Show between 4 and 6 p.m. All will be held at the Bayside Exposition Center. About 10,000 people are expected to attend each day. Admission is \$12 for adults and \$7 for children. Parking is \$12. Tickets are available only at the Bayside box office. For more information, call 508-533-1153 or go to [www.baycolonydogshow.com](http://www.baycolonydogshow.com).

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