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Rags to Wags Fundraising Gala Report: Making Bank for Barks and Cash for Cats



Angelo, on the right, was adopted.

The [Austin Humane Society](#)'s annual fundraising gala event [Rags to Wags](#) took place this past Saturday at the Four Seasons hotel on Lady Bird Lake.

Early in the evening, attendees for the sold-out event filled the lower level of the Four Seasons, spilling out into the warm evening and occupying the couches and chairs of the pool-side patio. People were dressed in everything from dinner jackets

and evening gowns to serious dark suits with far-less-serious puppy-dog ties. (This writer was wearing last-season's evening dress from Hot Topic's chunky-girl store [Torrid](#), which was purchased on clearance. Thankfully, no one else at the event appeared to be wearing the same outfit!)

As attendees entered the event they were asked to choose either a chicken or vegan (!) entree. Each attendee was presented with a packet containing a large, highly-visible black-numbers-on-a-white-background auction paddle and the opportunity to pre-swipe credit cards for ease of post-event, post-auction checkout.

The silent auction started before the ballroom opened for dinner. Here attendees had the opportunity of bidding on numerous goods and services including: personal training sessions, spa services and elaborate gift baskets with nice, clean, unchewed dog toys.

If you wanted to bid on a silent-auction item - say the gift basket with the sign reading "Dogs are people too" - all you had to do was write down the number from your auction paddle on the spot next to the amount you wanted to pay.

Once the doors to the ballroom opened, and the plated dinner was being served, guests raised their auction paddles to bid during the live auction session. (The most dog-oriented live auction package included tickets to the 2013 [Westminster Kennel Club and dog show](#).)

During the "Paws Up" donation-request portion of the event, where guests were hit up for donations starting at the \$10,000 level—plenty of people raised their paddles to make straight-up donations to the charity. According to Whitney Hanson, Marketing Associate for the Austin Humane Society, The Paws Up portion of the event alone raised over 6,000 nights of shelter for homeless animals. (The entire event raised over \$315,000 for the charity!)

Part of the success of the live-auction and the "Paws Up" event was doubtless helped by [gold-top hatted](#) paddle-spotters who were holding light-up toys, so that the auctioneer wouldn't miss any donations or bids in the back of the sold-out ballroom.

Like much of the Internet - but unlike most fundraising events - this party featured kittens! Lots and lots of adoptable kittens! White ones, black ones, sleeping ones!

Then there was wine! And entertainment! And costumes! And more doggies! While [this video](#) is from the 2010 Rags to Wags event, it's a taste of what the event was like this year.

Since the event, seven of the nineteen animals who were in the show have been adopted, and at least one more animal has been placed on hold by a prospective owner.

While Saturday night was about fun and fancy outfits, don't forget that the evening's proceeds went to those animals in need of medical care, shelter and loving families.

Below is the heart-tugging video that was played before the "Paws Up" donation portion of the event.

Austin Humane Society: [[website](#)]

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