



Canine Congregations

Breed loyalists and lovers meet up with fellow fans

for fun and camaraderie. By Jen Reeder

Photo by Joey Burtoni & Katie Rowan

Blue and Bailey



One of the highlights of 2025 for Michelle Starr was the Pismo Beach Corgi Nation Vacation. She drove three hours from her Carmel, California home with her two Pembroke Welsh Corgis, Bailey and Blue, to join her best friend and her Cardigan Welsh Corgi, Pickles—and hundreds of other Corgis and their people—for a one-of-a-kind weekend.

The event kicked off with a Hawaiian luau, where each Corgi got a flower lei and the chance to pose in Corgi-sized cabanas for photos before joining other “pawty” goers for “barktails” and “corg d’oeuvres” at a hotel overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Other festivities included a wine tasting, Corgi pizza party, and a public meetup on the beach with con-

tests for best costume, loudest bark, and best “momo” (rump).

Bailey and Blue delighted in meeting other Corgis and basking in attention from every person they met. Seeing her dogs happy made Starr happy, naturally. She loves the breed because of its endearing personality and hilarious antics.

“You could be having a terrible day, and you look over and they’re upside down, tongue out of their mouth, four feet up in the air and you just have to smile,” she says. “Corgis just have this different, funny little personality.”

So she finds herself gravitating toward other people with Corgis, whether at big meetups hosted by So Cal Corgi Nation, like beach days at Huntington Beach that draw thousands of Corgis, or simply passersby on walks with her girls.

“When you see other Corgi people, you just have that instant connection,” Starr says. “You’re like, ‘Oh, you get it. You love Corgis, too.’”

Breed-specific meetups are increasingly popular with people who have a favorite dog breed. The gatherings can lead to friendships, offer unique enrichment opportunities for dogs, and create a special sense of community.

‘Goldens in Golden’

A Golden Retriever named Waffle inspired “Goldens in Golden,” in which thousands of Golden Retrievers descend on downtown Golden, Colorado, to pose for a group photo under the “Welcome to Golden” sign during a day of frivolity.

Joy Meadows suggested the idea



for the event to Visit Golden, which promotes tourism to the dog-friendly city in Colorado's Front Range. Since the inaugural event in 2019, it's grown

to welcome Golden Retrievers from every U.S. state except Rhode Island (organizers are crossing fingers for the next event). Vendors offer goodies, and

the free event features costume contests, games, and pup cups. Attendees also take advantage of the surrounding hiking trails and pet-friendly restaurants and brewery patios.

"It's a sea of Golden Retrievers," Meadows says.

Among the crowd she's spotted a man pulling a wagon with a senior Golden with a sign reading, "I'm a golden oldie. I'm 16 years old." People dote on the dog.

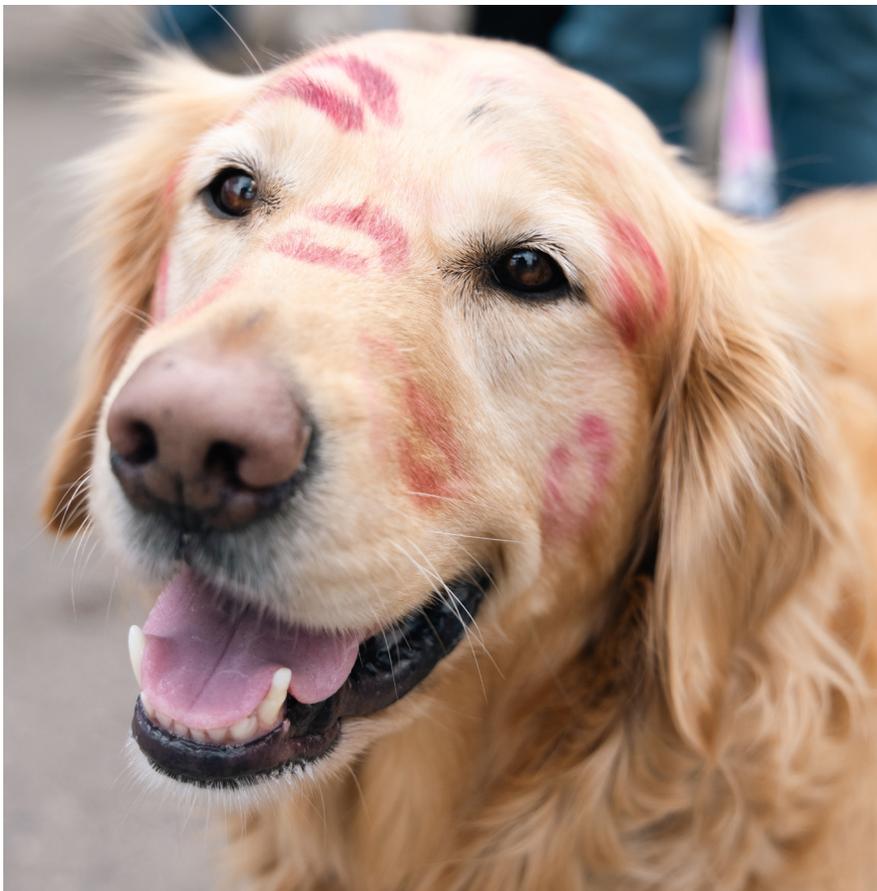
A woman who had just lost her Golden Retriever brought her dog's ashes and received hugs from many fellow Golden lovers. There have also been intrepid interlopers, like a black dog sporting a blonde wig.

Waffle enjoyed several "Goldens in Golden" events before passing away, but her legacy lives on, which makes the event particularly poignant for Meadows.

"I always take a moment, and I just breathe in the sheer happiness of the event. Just as much as Waffle meant to me is what these dogs mean to their people, and it's a wonderful feeling," she says. "I always get a little overcome."

In 2025, Michelle Tschudy attended her first "Goldens in Golden" event with her 11-year-old Golden Retriever, Zoey, who enjoyed all the dog treats and posed with Tschudy in a kissing booth.

Tschudy was impressed but not



Top: Courtesy Visit Golden; Bottom: Photo by Joey Burtroni & Katie Rowan



Michelle Tschudy and Zoey at "Goldens in Golden"



surprised that even with so many dogs in one place, there was no fighting since Golden Retrievers are typically so sweet.

"They're just smiley, welcoming, very into nature, very curious, adventure-some dogs," she says. "All they ever want to do is please you. They seem to do really well around kids, and they're very sensitive. I just think they're really loving and kind—and they are not good guard dogs."

The Basset Hound 'Boardwaddle'

Comedy reigns each spring when over 500 Basset Hounds make their way down the boardwalk in Ocean City, New Jersey, during the "Boardwaddle" as part of the Ocean City Doo Dah Parade. It's the main event of a three-day fundraiser for organizer Tri-State Basset Hound Rescue, according to Valerie Mazzei, the organization's president.

The parade is Ocean City's annual celebration of humor, so Basset Hounds are a perfect fit.

"It's a sight to see with all these floppy-eared, noisy, Frito-smelling lookalikes all going down the parade for one particular cause," she says. "They're very, very comical. They're comical in their looks, they're comical in their personalities. So, it just adds a bit of fun."

Mazzei and her family have 10 Bas-

set Hounds—Archie, Ginger, Grover, Ellie, Mack, Maddie, Pugsley, Reggie, Dottie, and Nini. Her kids will usually bring a couple while she oversees the weekend activities, which also include Basset Hound Olympics, with events like hurdles and the high jump, contests for best howl, and a dinner "Pawction," which is a Basset Hound-themed auction.

Surprisingly, Mazzei wasn't a "dog person" until about 16 years ago, when she and her young son found a stray Basset Hound named Lincoln on the

way home from grocery shopping. They couldn't find his family and after a week or so, she fell in love with the dog—and the breed.

"Basset Hounds have completely changed my life," she says. "I was that mother who didn't want dog hair on her kids. And now I've got ten in my house."

'Ruff' Rhodesian Ridgebacks

While some breed gatherings draw massive crowds of curious onlookers, others are simpler events organized by



Basset Hound "Boardwaddle"

Top/Left: Courtesy of Michelle Tschudy; Right: Photo by Joey Burton & Katie Rowan; Bottom: Courtesy Tim Hawk / Images On The Run

members of the public through websites like Meetup.com or social media sites. New York City resident Andy Honda, author of the children's book series "Koa's Ruff Life"—inspired by her Rhodesian Ridgeback, Koa—organizes monthly meetups for Rhodesian Ridgebacks in Central Park by posting details on her Instagram page (@Koa'sRuffLife).

The dogs can play off-leash together—since leashes aren't required in Central Park before 9 a.m.—and Honda likes to watch while swapping stories with other people who love the breed. As many as 20 dogs will attend, rearing up on their back legs to playfully spar like boxers in a ring.



Koa in NYC

"Koa gets excited when she sees the other Ridgebacks," she says. "They

play differently."

Rhodesian Ridgebacks were originally bred to hunt lions in Africa, and now make excellent running companions, which is what initially drew Honda to the breed. She and Koa run 5 to 7 miles most mornings, as she did with her previous Rhodesian Ridgeback, Kai.

She's grateful to have found an athletic breed that's perfect for her lifestyle. She also loves Rhodesian Ridgebacks for being so loyal and intelligent. Koa is gentle enough to be a therapy dog, often working at a children's hospital and at a school for kids with special needs.

Ultimately, Honda is happy to share her life with a breed that she loves and to have found a community of people who also love Rhodesian Ridgebacks. She notes it's possible to find special communities centered around other breeds since all kinds of dogs bring so much joy to our lives.

"No matter what breed you have, when you're with others who have the same breed, there's that connection because you've chosen this dog for a reason," she says. "I think, in general, life is better with dogs." **FD**

Journalist Jen Reeder is the 2025 Hall of Fame inductee of the Dog Writers Association of America.

Online Canine Connections

While canine communities often thrive with in-person meetups, strong connections can also form online. For example, the Tripawds Pet Amputation Support Community offers online support for anyone with a dog or cat facing amputation or with bone cancer.

René Agredano and her husband Jim Nelson created Tripawds in 2006 after their German Shepherd Dog, Jerry, lost a leg to osteosarcoma. Initially they started it as a blog to document Jerry's progress for friends and family. But other people whose dogs had cancer found their blog and started asking questions, so they expanded Tripawds to a discussion forum that now has over 25,000 registered members—they even had to move it to a new platform in 2025. The group also created the nonprofit Tripawds Foundation to give grants of up to \$1,000 toward amputation surgeries to families in need.

Agredano feels it's a "labor of love" that helps people feel less scared and alone once they join. She's grateful for the people around the world—sometimes using translation devices to communicate in English—who take time to share insights and advice with the Tripawds community.

"Every day something in that community restores my faith in humanity," she says. "I am reminded that there is good in everyone, even during really tough times."

For more information, visit tripawds.com.



Jerry, the tripawd who inspired the group