

# Who doesn't love those gorgeous redheads?

Among all those cute dancing leprechauns marching in next Sunday's Saint Patrick's Day parade in downtown Cleveland will be a bunch of gorgeous but rambunctious redheads. These four-legged beauties represent the Irish Setter Club of Ohio, accompanied by owners and friends who have proudly walked their loved canines in the parade for more than two decades.

Among them is Victoria Lindeman, who handles parade arrangements for the club. She and her 3-year-old setter, Major, will be among the marchers. "Just being at the parade is fun," she said. "There's so much energy and happiness, and the dogs get excited, too." She laughed as she explained they don't even try to march in formation because all along the parade route kids are extending their hands to give the dogs a pet and the dogs are anxious to oblige.

Lindeman says anywhere from 10 to upwards of 20 or 30 dogs and handlers march, depending largely on weather the day of the week the parade is held. She laments that the breed is not as popular as it once was so marching in front of thousands of parade-goers poses the breed to many who may not be familiar with Irish setters. "We get to share our dogs with others," she said. She has owned setters for nearly 20 years, starting with Louie, who was a puppy mill dog. Dugan followed, and he and Major, both purebreds, lived together for more than two years before Dugan passed in 2023.

All three dogs were show dogs. There are several categories Irish setters compete in: obedience, agility or field and conformation. Louie did obedience and agility. As a purebred, Dugan added conformation to his list of competitions, enabling her and Lindeman to travel as far



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as Georgia or Colorado for competitions. She and Major also travel to out of state competitions.

Lindeman's setters also have the distinction of being therapy dogs. She explained that obedience training was a priority because the breed has a lot of energy and is very smart. Because she drilled down on obedience training for her dogs, each was able to pass the required test to earn therapy dog designation. They've visited nursing homes, served as reading buddies to young children at schools and libraries, and been a support to high schoolers, "not because something happened," she explained, "but to make them happy."

Elyria resident Jeannie Wagner is current President of the Irish Setter Club of Ohio. She grew up with various breeds of dogs but when her husband needing a hunting companion, they settled on the Irish setter who, for centuries, was known as a great companion and hunting dog. Asked how long she's owned setters, Wagner laughed and said, "We're talking some 50 years ago."

One thing led to another and eventually the entire family, children included, showed their setters locally and around the country. To counteract criticism of the breed's supposed inability to hunt, the family started breeding Irish setters at their Kerrycourt Kennels in Penfield Township.

Her first setters won competitions for

obedience, field work and conformation. Conformation has to do with a dog's looks based on the standard of that particular breed. It's significant because those dogs' puppies will likely meet that standard as well. Many of the puppies bred from Wagner's dogs went on to become champions, like their parents and grandparents.

All the accolades aside, both Wagner and Lindeman praise the breed for many other reasons. Irish setters are very active. "They need a job," said Wagner, which might explain why Lindeman's make such great therapy dogs. They also excel at agility competitions. Lindeman's dog, Major, recently began dock diving where dogs are judged on how far or how high they leap from a stationary dock into a body of water.

They are also very smart, Wagner said once they learn something, they don't forget it, which is why obedience training is so very important.

Both were in total agreement that Irish setters are fun. Wagner laughed and said they can be clowns, and Lindeman called them "big kids who are anxious to please."

While Wagner, now in her mid 70s can no longer march in the parade due to knee issues, Lindeman is busy lining up fellow Irish setter owners to march down Superior Avenue next week. She even "borrows" setters from a few of her colleagues so her friends and their children have a dog they can march with. To say she is proud to be able to show off the beautiful dogs is a bit of an understatement.

Whether marching in a parade or competing, one thing is certain, according to Lindeman. "At the end of the day, we take home a dog we love knowing every one is 'best in show'."

*If you have ideas for stories about pets, send them along. Michele Murphy looks forward to sharing them with her readers. Contact her at avonlakemurphy@gmail.com.*



Victoria Lindeman and Dugan hang out with Larry Payner and Dugan's sister Aurora prior to the start of a recent St. Patrick's Day Parade. Aurora is mom to Lindeman's other setter, Major.

PHOTOS PROVIDED



As a certified therapy dog, Dugan regularly works with young readers at school or libraries. Here Dugan and Victoria Lindeman (right) work with a little boy as his parents look on.