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Article published Feb 2, 2006  
Loyal dog fetches \$3,625 for local charity  
Bidders honor late veterinarian as krewe crowns pet.  
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When the on-air auction opened at 7 a.m. Wednesday morning to determine what dog would lead the Krewe des Chiens' annual parade, bidding was brisk. It started out as a fundraiser to benefit local animal rescue organizations. Before it ended, it turned into a tribute to late veterinarian Dr. Donald Doiron.

Each year, radio hosts CJ and Debbie Ray of KTDY 99.9 FM host the auction in which dog owners call in bids. The position of grand marshal of the all-canine krewe's Carnival parade goes to the highest bidder.

"We turned on the radio and they had started bidding, already," said Catherine Lemoine of Doiron-Plauché Veterinary Hospital. "Dr. Andy (Plauché) came in and asked what the bidding was, and it was up to \$1,500."

Plauché told his staff to call in a bid of \$1,600 in memory of Doiron, who died Jan. 22.

Having Gabe, Doiron's 9-year-old black labrador retriever, serve as grand marshal would be particularly meaningful, said Kaylin Bertrand, who also works at the veterinary clinic and was at the radio station for the call-in auction.

"He was very proud of Gabe, very fond of him," she said.

Not only was Gabe Doiron's constant companion on hunting and fishing trips, he was with him right up to the end.

"(Doiron) fell in the driveway," Bertrand said. "Gabe was the one who alerted someone riding a four-wheeler in the field that something was wrong."

When Kackie Lerille, whose dog is a member of the Krewe des Chiens, heard Plauché's bid, she decided to call the station to add \$100 of her own to the bid.

Then, the bidding took on a life of its own. Clients of Doiron's - business associates, friends and animal lovers - began calling in, adding \$100 or more at a time to the bids.

The response was not a complete surprise to Debbie Ray.

"I think Dr. Doiron was a very special person and a lot of people thought a lot of him, including myself, and wanted to honor his memory," she said. "Everybody loved Dr. Don."

Jude Simon and his wife, Jacy, who already had bid \$1,200 to try to secure the position for their own dogs, Pollie and Vedder, got swept up in the moment.

"My wife and I really wanted our dogs to be grand marshals," said Simon, who co-owns Spoiled Pets Spa and Boutique and the Lafayette Nextel store with his wife.

But that changed when he heard what was going on with the auction. He called in to bid against himself.

"We put in \$500," he said. "I hear he was a pretty good guy. I didn't know him, but I thought it was a heartwarming story."

As of Wednesday afternoon, donations had totaled \$3,625, Lemoine said. Last year's total was \$1,000, Lerille said, adding that the money comes at a critical time for local pet shelters, after hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Normally, the grand marshal and his or her owner rides in a car to lead the parade. This year, the krewe plans to have a flatbed truck to hold not only Gabe, but all of Doiron's nine grandchildren.

For Nannette St. Cyr, Doiron's daughter, it was an emotional day.

"It's been overwhelming, the people he touched," she said. "This was an additional tribute to my dad. We were honored."

