

THE WAYLAND TOWN CRIER

ARTS & LIFESTYLE

LIFESTYLES

Barking up the right tree

Susan L. Sherwood/ Staff Writer
Thursday, April 1, 2004

Area designers, architects build custom dog dwellings to raise money for animal rescue

The expression "in the doghouse" has taken on new meaning for a number of area canines thanks to the architects, designers and builders who donated more than 20 custom doghouses for the recent "Barkitecture" auction to benefit the Hull Seaside Animal Rescue.

About 250 dog lovers attended the event, shelling out up to \$2,200 to obtain new digs for their favorite pooches.

Altogether, the doghouses, which were sold at live auction, and nearly 60 donations of goods and services for a silent auction brought in more than \$30,000 for the animal rescue, an all-volunteer-run nonprofit founded in 1999. The funds have significantly advanced the organization's project to build a permanent animal shelter in Hull so that no animal is destroyed for lack of a home.

"We were floored," said Hull Seaside Animal Rescue volunteer Pamela Loring, who coordinated the event. "We took in more money than we ever expected. It was so successful that it's just going to have to become an annual affair."

Among the benefactors were Wayland resident Bill Sterling, head of Sterling Associates Inc., Architects of Cambridge, whose Bau-wau Haus, built in conjunction with Paramount Construction Corp. of Hudson, fetched \$425. Ken Vona of Ken Vona Construction Inc. of Wayland, who built the Doghouse-Birdhouse-Lighthouse, brought in \$2,000. The bidding war over the Doghouse-Birdhouse-Lighthouse became so intense that Vona offered to build two more.

"So we sold three altogether, each of which raised \$2,000," says Loring. "But one of the three was put back up on the auction block by the buyer who actually re-donated it. So, in all, this design brought in \$8,000."

"Barkitecture is a concept popularized by Fred Albert's book 'Barkitecture,' a compilation of designer doghouses," Loring said. "Carol Taylor, the director of the Hull shelter, heard of a barkitecture auction in Missouri, which was a very successful fundraiser, and decided to give it a try here. So far as we know, though, this was the first time that such an event has been held in New England."

Vona's Doghouse-Birdhouse-Lighthouse was designed by Susan Dinion of Roberts Dinion Architects Inc. of Berlin. According to the Barkitecture program notes, "This distinctive seashore home features spacious quarters in which to lounge after a difficult day of chasing cats. A stunning 5-foot high authentic lighthouse creates a landmark in the neighborhood with working rotating light and observation deck with brackets. Empty-nesters can summer in the second story studio apartment with spectacular views. The lower cottage wing features a custom tailored doorway providing gracious entry for small to mid-sized salty dogs. Quality construction throughout and architectural faux painting make this cozy canine cottage the ideal retreat for dog-day afternoons."

According to Vona, the Doghouse-Birdhouse-Lighthouses probably took him 32 hours each to build. "Plus Susan's labor and artistic input of another 32 hours or so, that's 64 hours for one doghouse. The cost for the materials, at about \$500 for each, wasn't trivial either. Just the light on top cost \$180."

The inspiration for the Doghouse-Birdhouse-Lighthouse, Vona added, came from Dinion's design ideas for the renovation of his house on the Cape.

"She came to us about building the doghouse based on what she designed for my place. And, since my wife and I belong to just about every dog organization in America, we were delighted to get involved," he said. "We were amazed at how popular the Doghouse-Birdhouse-Lighthouse was, but given the facts that the auction was held in Cohasset to benefit a shelter in Hull, both seaside communities, and that it had a lighthouse theme, I guess we shouldn't have been too surprised."

As for the Bau-wau House, Sterling says he designed it one night while watching the finals of the Westminster Dog Show in New York. "Or was it 'Best in Show?' I can't remember. Anyway, even though my wife and I don't have a dog right now, one of our partners brings two cocker spaniels into the office. We thought about them as we worked on the project. While we were building the house, Todd Marsh of Paramount Construction was really helpful. He assisted us in putting it all together and let us use his shop."

Again according to the program description, the Bau-Wau house is "an international style house, suited to meet the discriminating taste of the well-traveled midsize canine. This contemporary house is a passive solar structure with a spacious open plan living and dining space downstairs and a cozy sleeping loft with a view above."

At the upper end of the bidding, the Doghouse-Birdhouse-Lighthouse was by no means the biggest budget-breaker at the show. That honor went to Spec to Spectacular: Traditional Dog House Renovation, submitted by Sally Weston Associates with Turner Custom Building, both of Hingham, which fetched \$2,200. This traditional spec doghouse ranch "renovated into a classic Vineyard style cottage," featured beamed cathedral ceiling and "shabby chic interiors."

-- PHOTOGRAPHS --



Wayland resident Bill Sterling, head of Sterling Associates Inc. Architects of Cambridge, whose Bau-wau Haus, built in conjunction with Paramount Construction Corp. of Hudson, fetched \$425. (Courtesy photos)



Ken Vona of Ken Vona Construction Inc. of Wayland built the Doghouse-Birdhouse-Lighthouse, which was so popular, auction goers started a bidding war over it.



Sally Weston Associates with Turner Custom Building created a doghouse ranch "renovated into a classic Vineyard style cottage," which brought in top dollar.