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## Lifestyles Archive

# Fido goes formal: It's white tie and wagging tails

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BY [PAIGE WISER](#) Staff Reporter

When CarrieAnn DeYoung and Frank Napoli decided to formalize their relationship, the first step was obvious: formalwear for their dogs.

"We get stopped all the time because of the vast difference in sizes," says DeYoung. Her little Yorkies weigh around 3 pounds apiece; his mastiff, 200. So she dressed them up in bridalwear. The biggest challenge was finding an appropriate ensemble for big boy Largo.

"We couldn't get a tie around his neck, so we bought a tux shirt and ripped the sleeves," DeYoung says. A local photographer captured the pups looking none too happy.

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The Geneva design firm Oscar Newman created this one-of-a-kind Swarovski gown for Pet Fashion Week in New York. Special order items like this cost

**\$500 and up.**

## **SPECIAL SECTION**

### [The Dog Days of Summer](#)

**Coming tomorrow:** Big men, little dogs

## **DOGS DOMINATE THE CATWALK**

Pet Fashion Week will be held in New York on Aug. 19 and 20. (Yes, we realize that "Pet Fashion Weekend" would be more accurate, but the dogs don't seem to know the difference.) "The industry has long waited for this," says Mario DiFante, executive director of the extravaganza. The preliminary schedule includes a trade show, runway show, black-tie fund-raiser and more. For information on the event, visit [www.petfashionweek.com](http://www.petfashionweek.com).

## **SHAGGY DOG SHAMPOO**

Chicago entrepreneur Bobbi Panter created her Natural Pet Pampering Products to cheer up her dog Bobo after eye surgery. The shampoos and detanglers are made with aloe, tea tree oil, lavender and wheat protein, so aromatherapy is a bonus. The products have names such as Gorgeous Dog, Itchy Dog, Stinky Dog, Bad Hair Day Dog and Snarly Dog. Try them all with the sampler package, \$29.99 at [www.bobbipanter.com](http://www.bobbipanter.com).

The resulting picture wound up on their wedding invitation. It reads, "Our 'parents' are in love ... and it's time they got married!"

"I am not some weirdo animal lover," DeYoung says. She just wanted something more memorable to set the tone for her big day. "I think people take weddings too seriously," she says.

Besides, the dogs are family. Largo, Bailey and Sette are "just like having kids to us," says DeYoung. In some ways, it's harder than having kids; the bride notes that you rarely have to walk your children at 10 p.m. in the middle of a Chicago winter.

Animals won't actually be a part of the wedding ceremony. As it turns out, St. Michael's Church frowns on it. But the dogs will make it into the wedding album.

The wedding isn't until September, but the invites are already a hit. "People actually call us about them, laughing," she says. DeYoung, a special events and marketing coordinator, is even thinking about creating personalized invitations for clients.

If the trend for pets in weddings continues, she should have plenty of business. "People really love their dogs," says Jennifer Schoonmaker, the owner of Barrington pet boutique Cody and Carl's Blvd. Since the shop opened in February, she has gotten a substantial number of requests for dog formalwear.

"It's a novelty area," she says, "but people are looking for it. I've even gotten a call from a personal shopper in San Diego, looking for a tuxedo for a 50- to 60-pound dog. I told her to try the children's department at Neiman's."

Schoonmaker capitalized on the trend in June, throwing a dog wedding to promote the store. The weather was beautiful, the guests included a disproportionate number of kids and pets, and shih-tzu Cody solemnly exchanged barks with "good friend" Lucy, a silky West Highland White terrier.

Associating shih-tzus with the sacred institution of marriage is becoming "more and

more normal," says Schoonmaker. She recently sold a \$150 dog bed to a customer who wanted a "really original" wedding gift.



**If your dog isn't a fussy dresser, a simple black shirt and formal collar might be the way to go. These getups are available at Cody and Carl's Blvd., a pet boutique in Barrington.**



There are varying degrees of doggie formalwear, Schoonmaker points out. She also sells custom collars that can spell out "Best Man," "Flower Girl" and so on, in rhinestones (up to \$50); black ring-bearer T-shirts (\$28), and a white collar with a black bow tie (\$12.50). "They're so cute," she says.

But canine couture is becoming increasingly serious. The Geneva-based design team known as Oscar Newman has dressed the dogs of Tori Spelling, Paula Abdul and Star Jones Reynolds. "Star wanted a red carpet outfit for her dog, and she ended up with the lavender beaded tank," says partner Charisa Antigua. The tank retails for about \$85-\$95. "Star wore a lavender dress so she would match the tank." Both Reynolds and her Maltese, Pinky, turned heads at the 2005 Emmys.

"People are really spoiling their dogs now," Antigua says. "It's like nothing is too much for them. But we don't have kids, so when you consider the 15 short years that dogs give you ... You don't send them to college, you don't buy them a car. What's a \$150 leather coat for them, once in a while, for 15 years of loyalty? Put it in that perspective, and it's not too bad."

Antigua and her sister Carmina O'Connor were artists who realized they were getting commissions for quite a few pets.

"Really huge canvases," says Antigua. "It was a natural to move into clothing." The sisters were recently tapped to create a Swarovski-encrusted original gown for Pet Fashion Week in New York.

It's not just to entertain the owners, Antigua says. The dogs *like* getting dressed up. "They know that once they're wearing this outfit, they're going somewhere," Antigua says. "And that makes them really happy."

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