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(ran East edition of Pasco Times)

The real name of Elizabeth Bodine's dog, the one she adopted from a small town in Italy, is Macchia, Italian for "spot" or "stain."

"But the neighbors call her Mafia because she's such a bully," said Bodine, an international flight attendant, who watched as her friend Michele Curtis held Macchia's leash as the dog snarled at nearly every passing animal.

Bodine, who brought her two other adopted strays - one from the streets of Moscow - said she came to the Wags for Wishes dog show hoping to find a pet psychic who could give her some insight into Macchia's behavior.

"She's nuts," Bodine said.

A consultation with the psychic was one of the raffle prizes at the event Saturday at Weeki Wachee Springs, which raised awareness and about \$2,500 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Sarasota/Tampa Bay.

The show offered pet massages, face painting, pony rides and a so-called marriage between two bulldogs.

"We hope your love for each other deepens with each woof," said Joan Levy, who performed the ceremony.

The organization sponsored Wags for Wishes because Hernando is on the northern edge of the chapter's service area, said Vee Yerrid, executive director. The aim of the dog show was to let people know the organization is active in the area and to clear up a common misconception.

Many people think Make-A-Wish only grants wishes to terminally ill children and their families, she said. In fact, any child with a life-threatening illness may qualify. Make-A-Wish gives these children and their families a break from dealing with their ailments.

Elisa Thelen's daughter, Alexis, 5, was one of the judges for the best kisser contest, which meant she had to allow a succession of dogs to lick her face - a job she seemed to love, judging from her smiles and the way she reached out for each contestant.

She has Angelman Syndrome, Thelen explained as she scrubbed her daughter's face with a baby wipe after the contest.

The syndrome is a genetic condition named for the doctor who identified it. Among other symptoms, the syndrome severely impairs the ability to walk and talk. Thelen said she didn't know if Angelman qualified for Make-A-Wish but decided to make a telephone call, which eventually led to a week's stay at a Disney resort.

"We didn't pay for anything. It was all Make-A-Wish," she said.

The trips give families good memories to share, Yerrid said.

Thelen said their excursion certainly did that.

"We talk about it all the time," she said.

Dogs and Make-A-Wish don't necessarily go together, said Curtis, who, like her friend, is a dog owner. But maybe it is not just coincidence that Bodine, who makes weekly flights to Russia, sponsors an orphanage there, bringing clothes and money every trip, Curtis said.

"I think they know that animal people are usually giving people."

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, KERI WIGINTON, (3); Beverly Zaldivar holds Ivy for a kiss with Odie after the dogs were "married" Saturday at the Wags for Wishes dog show. ; Donna More's Doberman pinscher, Eddie, waits to strut his stuff in a costume show at the Wags for Wishes dog show Saturday; at Weeki Wachee Springs. (ran Pasco); The winners of the pet look-a-like contest at the Wags for Wishes dog show? Emily Adams, 12, and Candy, her miniature long-haired dachshund.