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Posted on Fri, Aug. 10, 2007

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Dog days activities unleashed!

These fun doins' will have you begging for

OLIVIA FORTSON AND JAMIE SHEATS-JOHNSON
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You're hot. It's humid. These are, officially, the dog days of

How to observe the season's sultriest days? If you have a few ideas for special activities or excursions that will have your dog don't, there are still a few ways to worship dogs that won't cost

Pick of the litter

This Sunday, the Charlotte Knights will host their annual **Bark** dogs will be admitted free to the Knights' 2:15 p.m. game and receive a free dog toy courtesy of PetsMart as they enter the feature on-field promotions in which dog owners will compete at Knights Stadium, Exit 88 off I-77 in Fort Mill, S.C. \$7-\$12. 7
www.charlotteknights.com.

For people with dogs **Grog for your dog:** Furry friends are always welcome at the **Dog Bar**, a pub designed just for dogs and their owners. Membership (\$10) is required. 3307 N. Davidson St. 704-370-3595; www.dogbarnoda.com.

Pawtie central: The **Canine Cafe** specializes in gourmet treats and hosts doggie birthday "pawties." Stop by for Yappy Hour, 2-4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. 1447 S. Tryon St. 704-588-3647; www.caninecafe.net.

Canine getaway: **Four Paws Kingdom** outside of Rutherfordton is a 32-acre camp site that has lots of amenities for Fido, including a fenced-in dog park, an agility course and a doggy swimming pond. www.4pawskingdom.com.

Pamper your pup: Rubbing your dog's belly is so passé. **Atrium Animal Hospital** at 6520 McMahon Drive has services including acupuncture and homeopathy. 704-542-2000; www.atriumanimalhospital.com.

For people without dogs

(but who still have a thing for dogs)

Bark at the moon -- er, the star: They're called the "dog days of summer" because this period marks the appearance of **the Dog Star** (a.k.a. Sirius). Here's a viewing tip from Jim Craig, planetarium director at the Schiele Museum of Natural History in Gastonia: **It's most visible Aug. 15-22.** Just before sunrise, look to the southeast; it will be the brightest star on the horizon.

At their most fetching: Perhaps you've seen those photographs of elegant long-legged Weimeraners posed with clothes and props. A collection of those works, by **surrealist photographer William Wegman**, is owned by Bank of America and on display through Aug. 25 at the BofA Gallery. 214 N. Tryon St. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday. 704-386-7324. -- *Miriam Durkin*

Hot diggity: Charlotte's a great hot dog town now. A few worth a try:

- Authentic Chicago-style hot dogs with steamed poppy seed bun at **Matt's Chicago Dog**. Vienna all-beef hot dog pops when you bite into it. Charlotte (425 S. Tryon St.; 704-333-3650) and Cornelius (19732 One Norman Blvd.; 704-892-5005).
- Grilled kosher dog on a toasted bun at **Five Guys Famous Burgers and Fries** in the 'burbs. The fries are exceptional -- made from fresh potatoes. The regular size can feed a family of four. Four Charlotte locations and one in Concord. www.fiveguys.com.
- A bargain is the 99-cent dog at one of the many **Cook Out** carry-out restaurants. (Charlotte locations: North Sharon Amity at Milton Road; Sugar Creek at I-85; Freedom Drive at Aldi Foods; Sunset at Beatties Ford Road; and Albemarle Road at Aldi Foods.)
- Rich, spicy chili with beans give personality to the Kahn's all-beef hot dog at the cart belonging to the **Chili Man**, who steams the dog, then grills it. South Tryon Street between Fourth and Trade Streets uptown. -- *Michael WEINSTEIN*

B.Y.O.D. (Bring Your Own Dog)

- If you're looking for a safe place for Rover to roam, **off-leash parks** for dogs allow exceptions to county leash laws. Dogs must have proof of rabies vaccination, a county dog license and a pooch pass (fees are being phased out in 2008 and vary) to use off-leash areas. Details: www.parkandrec.com (click on "dog parks").
- To search for more **dog-friendly hotels**, go to www.officialpethotels.com. Win Tickets to Bark in the Park

Tell us why your dog should win four tickets to Bark in the Park, courtesy of the Charlotte Knights. Send an email to wintickets@charlotteobserver.com. Subject line must read "Bark in the Park." Include name and daytime number. Deadline: 5 p.m. today.

