

SANTA CLARITA

EDITION



Weather report
High 75
Low 55
Air quality
Moderate
For details, see back of book

LONG ON CHARM



Mia, above, won this year's America's Top Dog Model 2008 contest, with the help of her owner, Pam Rockelshausen, below, of Valencia.

Mia goes from rags to top dog

BY SUE DOYLE
Staff Writer

VALENCIA — She yearns, she lives in silk and sequins. On Thursday she wears a tiara and crown and waits the red carpet.

Mia's life story unfolds like a classic rags-to-riches tale. But unlike other Cinderellas she'll never wear glass slippers, because Mia is a dog.

And now this dachshund is flying to Boca Raton to celebrate her grand prize win in America's Top Dog Model contest. The event also serves as a fund-raiser for a Florida animal shelter.

"Once Day One, I said this dog belongs on a calendar or doing doggy jewelry or clothing," said owner Pam Rockelshausen. "But for the last seven years, I've been a hard-nosed candidate to purchase it. Now that my kids are older, I have the money."

Mia will grace the 2009 calendar of America's Top Dog national calendar — one of her gifts for winning.

The pooch also received a one-year membership in the Dog



DOG: MODEL BEHAVIOR

Dachshund is pawsitively fabulous

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Actors Guild, a dog dream house and a Swarovski crown.

More than 200 entered the free contest where owners submitted photos of their dogs, most dressed up to match the "home is where the heart is" theme, said Jo Jo Harder, Top Dog Model president.

Contest judges chose Mia the winner based on her photogenic abilities and also for her rough start in life.

Ruckelshausen found the dog through a small newspaper ad. Arriving at a breeder's tiny

house, Ruckelshausen and her family were sickened by the stench and filth they saw inside. They quickly turned and walked out.

But when they got to their car, Ruckelshausen was handed the tiny pup by daughter Aarica, who bought the dog when no one was looking.

Mia joined two other dachshunds: Rucks, now 17, and Brownie, now 12. The three canines join Ruckelshausen at work every day inside the corporate office of a plumbing supply company. They even wear name tags on the job.

"I can't imagine my life without one," Ruckelshausen said.

For her big debut, Mia will sport rhinestones in her nails and will wear a hot pink outfit with a crocodile skin texture, along with a pink collar and crown.

Harder, a clothing designer, stylist and writer has created a book on fashion for dogs. She developed the contest last year as a marketing tool for her book, which has not yet been published. The contest's popularity has taken her by surprise.

"It's just so incredible," she said. "We had such a tremendous response, and at the same time we can benefit a charity, too."

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