

## The Phoenix “Sponsored Winter Dog Walk” 2026

The Winter Dog Walk fundraiser was held on Sunday morning 11<sup>th</sup> January 2026, and took place in and around St Sauveur’s walking paths and woodlands.

A BIG Thank You to everyone who participated in the organising, all the walkers for putting in the effort on the day, and everyone who donated towards and sponsored the event. We do it for our dogs!

This being the first *Winter dog walk fundraiser* that Phoenix had done in St Sauveur since the Summer dog walks there in 2018 and 2019, one always had to be mindful of the weather conditions on the event day. The date too had to be a chasse-free day, so the advice of the St Sauveur walking club was elicited who then contacted the Chasse Association for such information.

The planning and logistics for the winter event had to include a contingency plan for the assembly point in case of inclement weather. All the outdoor posters, road signs and roadside advertising boards had to be covered in plastic and sealed to ensure that they would remain waterproofed for the duration of the publicity period. Right from the start, the Phoenix members were kept in the communication loop by being notified and then reminded of the upcoming fundraiser, with all the publicity and sponsoring fanfare being emailed to them.

The assembly point was the campervan parking area of St Sauveur. Despite the frozen and slippery tarmac, the temperature at 08h30 that morning was just above zero. The walkers and their dogs started arriving around 9h00, the former donning woolly caps, scarves, gloves and thick jackets. Some dogs, especially the older ones, also wore coats. By the time registration started at 09h30, there was not a parking space to be had in the parking area, and there were walkers and excited dogs everywhere. The registration and refreshment tables were prepared and manned by dog walk team members and Phoenix volunteers, and the former also acted as road marshals.

All dogs were kept on leads in the assembly area and were very well behaved. A group of nine Cani cross runners from Croc’Cyrano, the Cani cross section of the trial club, Spirodon Périgord Pourpre, with their dogs, were eagerly waiting to start their own race. Two of their dogs (*Lester* and *Pilou*) were SPA dogs, and are available for adoption.

The turnout was surprisingly large, considering the bad weather on the days before. There were 80 walkers and 56 dogs, and the mix of dog breeds, sizes and ages was a thing to behold. The registration sheets have all the canines’ names listed. The walkers were mostly French, some English and a Dutch couple too, with their two big Leonberger dogs. Quite a few walkers had two dogs in tow, and some had none. There were also three other SPA dogs, *Jack*, *Nounours* and *Tyson*, with their SPA volunteer walkers. All three SPA dogs are up for adoption.

In addition to the dog walkers and their furry friends, there was a small group from our local St Sauveur walking club (Association des Chemins de Randonnées de St Sauveur), who were delighted to join the dog walk and spread themselves among the groups, keeping an eye out for any walkers going astray.

There were three special Phoenix rescues doing their first “public” walk with other dogs. *Buddy* \* a dog with an unfortunate past and almost ready for adoption, *Miel* \* and Biscott, two of three dogs rescued from Marocco, with *Miel* ready for adoption. Another first-time walker in public, was *Tao*\*, a tall, leggy Spanish Galgo, a very recent rescue, also with a sad past. Their foster carers’ personal accounts of this, their first group-walking experience, are included as inserts\*.

The Cani cross runners set off before the main group, not to be seen again until they were back in the parking area. Theirs was a good time of 48 minutes. They too have given a short anecdote of their 'walk'. The SPA volunteer walking *Tyson\** also gave an account of her walk.

The main group of walkers departed from the starting point a little after 10h00 in cold, misty conditions. They were stretched out along the tarred route, but after the rougher terrain and paths were reached, the group soon split into smaller pockets of walkers, going along at their own pace.

Once off the tarred road, the route was very wet underfoot because of the previous two days' rain and hail. Putting up the route markers on those days was not very pleasant for the person and their assisting dog. The Sunday walkers had to contend with puddles, shallow pools, stretches of sodden grassed paths and slippery, muddy tracks, but then, there were also long stretches of level, dryish leafy paths in the wooded areas, wide sandy service roads, and winding, narrow gentle up and down single file, tree-shrouded paths. With the exception of one big uphill towards the end, the ±8km route was not a difficult one. The first half hour of the walk was shrouded in a misty atmosphere, and then the sun appeared, and for the rest of the time everyone enjoyed glorious sunshine, albeit wintery rays.

It was a perfect winter's day to be out walking with our best furry friends in the chilly environs of St Sauveur. A great bonding day for man and beast, and hopefully new friendships were forged and interesting conversations struck up. Intermingling and interweaving amongst the walkers was the roving photographer, *Reija Feldmann*, who was constantly on the move, with no time to dawdle and chit-chat like the rest of the walkers. Other walkers also took photographs within their groups.

The ±8km walk took just under two hours for the first group, and once the walkers had returned to the parking area in St Sauveur, most made their way to the refreshment table for sustenance. The last person to arrive, quite a bit after everyone else had returned, was a Phoenix member and the oldest of all the walkers, accompanied by his two graceful Spanish Galgo rescue 'ladies'. At one stage there was concern about their whereabouts. However, on entering the parking area, the trio were accompanied by another Phoenix member and his Border Collie. The BC was definitely in charge of this 'search and lead mission'.

Hot beverages with a small pastry were on offer for one euro, and the dogs too were grateful for a fresh drink of water from bowls placed around the parking area. Then the lucky dip draw was started. There were 10 carrier bags, each filled with an assortment of goodies for dogs; a blanket, a bowl, a lick mat, a soft toy, a tossing ball, strips of meaty chews and a jar of biscuits. *Jo Bish* carried out a short introduction to Phoenix, followed by an entertaining raffle draw. Ten lucky dogs went home with these gift bags.

A convivial day was had by both two and four-legged walkers, and the participants expressed their thanks and appreciation for the organisation and work that had gone into making this fundraiser a memorable and successful occasion. Quite a few people asked if and when the next dog walk would take place, and many walkers commented on how well marked out the route was.

As is always the case after such an event, just the clearing and packing up remained to be done. Later that day, all the outdoor publicity was removed from the St Sauveur commune, and early the following week the route was walked again to remove all the markers and arrows.

We are happy to share the news that to date **€2 500** has been raised by this Winter Dog Walk fundraiser. A good sign that there are still so many people out there who care enough to want to help make a difference for the animals in Phoenix's care.

A selection of photos taken by our roving photographer, as well as those taken by other walkers, and an animated montage, can be viewed on the Phoenix website, on Facebook, and here.



*The winter dog walk team would like to give special thanks to everyone who helped to make this fundraiser such an enjoyable and successful event:*

-  The Mairie of St Sauveur; Mr Roland Fray (Maire), Jerome Goudonnet and Michel Lescombe (Adjoint), for the authorisation to hold the walk around St Sauveur, to use the campervan parking area as the assembly point and the amenities available, and for the use of the road sign boards and some chairs, and assisting with logistics.
-  The Association des Chemins de Randonnées de St Sauveur: Jacques Ricaud, Claude Brosse and other club walkers, for their advice and assistance, and especially for their attendance at the dog walk on the event day.
-  All the walkers and the general public for their participation and show of support on the event day.
-  All the sponsorships from those who donated so generously to this fundraiser.
-  Communication: Phoenix Conseil IT member, Emma Wadey; for website announcements, YAP publication, and Facebook publicity.
-  Treasury: Phoenix Conseil member, Linda Gibbons.
-  Photography: Roving photographer Reija Feldman, an animal behaviourist from 'Équilibre Animal'. And also, Jo Bish, Janet Hughes, Hugh Dunlop, and Eleanor Chivell.
-  Contact with local radio and newspapers: Fabienne Murphy
-  Preparing the publicity for "Faites l'Info": David Tong
-  Posting the announcement on "Panneau Pocket": Pauline Guibal (Adjoint) St Sauveur Mairie.
-  Registration Table: Responsibility David Tong and Hugh Dunlop. Assisted by Sharon Lawson and Sophie Nicol.
-  Refreshment Table: Responsibility Janet Hughes. Assisted by Sharon Lawson and Sophie Nicol.
-  A special note of thanks goes to the Bergerac SPA, who lovingly gave five SPA dogs the chance to have an active day outdoors. The SPA website can be accessed here. 
-  Sponsoring of pastries baked by « Chez Miche'tôt » in St Sauveur: Hugh Dunlop
-  Sponsoring of Lucky Dip Parcels: Eleanor Chivell
-  Lucky Dip draw and introductory note to the participants: Jo Bish

 "Flash Printers", for their friendliness and quick service in doing such a fine job of printing the posters and flyers etc.

 Bookfair Team: David Tong, for the use of Bookfair kitchen equipment for the refreshment's table.

 Winter Dog Walk Team: for their commitment to this fundraiser; David Tong, Hugh Dunlop, Sophie Nicol, Janet Hughes, Reija Feldmann, Aurélie Lavergne, Jo Bish, Eleanor Chivell

A special thank you to all the Phoenix members far and wide, and the general public at large, for your support, enthusiasm and generosity towards the worthy cause of "*caring for and rehoming animals in need*". Phoenix could not exist without your support in all its forms.

A few personal accounts about this fundraiser – Inserts\*

Sophie Nicol

At the end people were asking when the next one was!! It was great fun and we were so lucky. Eli you did such a great job, everybody was saying how well everything was marked!

It was my last Phoenix event as President and with Phoenix, and it was so enjoyable. I am so happy to have been part of it.

Hugh Dunlop

On the day we were relieved to find the weather cold but clear. As the time approached 09h30, we were so happy to see so many people and dogs arriving to brave the chilly morning, that we knew it was going to be a success! In fact, the car park was full and there were 84 humans and 56 dogs milling around. And then lo and behold the sun came out just in time!

After the walk the participants enjoyed a hot drink and a mini pastry. I was amazed by how well behaved all the dogs were – they seemed to love meeting other dogs and even other humans! Several people asked me when the next walk would be! So hopefully, in addition to the funds donated for the welfare of animals in need, Phoenix will benefit from the publicity the event generated.

We had started setting up the registration and drinks table at 08h15 and installing all that was required, and then we went off to set up the warning triangles at two places where the route crossed the main D32 road. It is worth mentioning that a lot of thought, planning and preparation by the team over the weeks and months beforehand went into making it such a success.

The ±8km route was marked out with arrows and tape in the runup to the event. Three weeks prior to the event, posters were placed in and around St. Sauveur. Prior to that, much effort had been made by advertising the walk in local commerce and veterinary clinics, with flyers and sponsor forms, and on several media outlets as well as the local radio stations.

I would also underline that without the authorization and help from the Mairie of St. Sauveur the walk could not have taken place.

David Tong

There is always a risk holding such an activity in the winter, so we had a good "Plan B" in place just in case. But we did not need it as the weather was perfect, albeit somewhat chilly.

It was good to see so many supporters and K9 friends enjoying the opportunity. It would have been good to have addressed everyone before the start, explaining what was happening, but it was not really a starter because of having that number of dogs in close proximity.

The location was ideal: shelter, power, water, parking and toilets. Perhaps the registration tables could have been more visible but you cannot have everything and it was nothing that a stentorian bellow couldn't overcome.

The hot drinks and pastries were much appreciated, and a lovely touch at the end. Along with the doggie bag draw, which was also well received.

An excellent day, well worth all the effort - particularly by Eli and Hugh. It would not have happened without them.

### Jo Bish

THE PHOENIX DOG IS BACK... and with style!

I was really concerned the weather would ruin the day, but it was the complete opposite!

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL WINTER'S DAY!!

The phoenix dog walk team arrived early bird, the car park tarmac was frozen yet the reception was set up and ready to go. Dedication. Will people come...? How many...?

Slowly but surely, one after another, people arrived, wrapped up warm and we heard all the different dogs getting out of each car, barking with excitement! There were big dogs, little dogs, old, young, long haired, some wearing winter jackets, all so happy and well behaved!

The walk was AMAZING, it's great to be alive!

When we all got back, a hot drink and little patisseries were waiting and so very welcome! We saw friends of old and made friends of new.

We asked everyone if they had enjoyed their walk, they really did, big smiles everywhere!

I think we might need to do another one! 😊❤️

### Linda Gibbons \*

🐕 Sunday's dog walk was truly unforgettable. 🐕  
80 people. 56 dogs. And one very special boy named *Buddy*.

*Buddy* is a rescue dog who was once chained and beaten.

At first, he was nervous... but he soon settled, relaxed, and even made friends with many of the dogs around him.

It was a wonderful experience for him to build his confidence and trust.

His foster carer and trainer were both there to support him, and this progress is thanks to the patient training he's receiving from Coline Crombach from 'Un Chien Idéal'. 🧡

The walk was so well organised, with guides leading the way, and refreshments served at the end.

It was also such a joy to meet so many lovely people who have adopted from Phoenix — seeing our rescues happy and loved is the greatest reward.

These walks are more than exercise. They heal, build confidence, and help make connections.

One walk, one paw, one life-changing step at a time. 🐾🧡

### Melanie Lefèvre - Canicross (SPA) \*

C'était très bien. On court souvent par-là, on aime beaucoup les chemins. Un seul croisement ou des petits malins s'étaient amusés à changer le sens de la flèche... on l'a remise en place pour les suivants. Mais c'était très bien balisé.

### Dominique Peltier - Bénévole (SPA) \*

Petit commentaire au nom de *Tyson* : je suis sûre que lui aussi a adoré. Il a hâte de faire une autre sortie.

Pour ma part avec *Tyson*, j'ai adoré cette 1ère sortie. Je n'ai pas l'expérience de Mélanie mais j'ai trouvé super. Bonne organisation, bonne entente, bonne dynamique. Tout était parfait. Merci pour cette belle initiative. Et merci à Mélanie de m'avoir accordé la participation avec *Tyson*. Belle journée.

### Aurélie Lavergne\*

It was the first dog walk for two of the Moroccan dogs we saved!

And also, the first time they saw each other since they left Casablanca. They had a great time!

*Miel* was a perfect dog, she enjoyed the walk and we did too. We were about 10 friends all walking together with 5 dogs, we had a great time, some coming from Charente, Ribérac or Le Buisson de Cadouin, and *Miel* my foster and I from Mussidan. The walk was just a great experience for the dogs and also for us.

## Reija Feldmann

The first Phoenix Winter Dog Walk started on a frozen Sunday in January.

The weather forecast was not the best, the air was frozen and the roads iced in the very early morning.

It was exciting to arrive at the parking with the sunrise, not knowing if anybody will come.

But more and more people and dogs arrived slowly.

Warm clothes for man and dog. Running around and barking, impatiently waiting for the starting shot.

All types and sizes of dogs were there: big and small, old and young.

People chatting and dogs sniffing at each other.

Most dogs were very excited and happy; some were nervous or overwhelmed with everything that was going on around them.

But the stress was gone the moment the whole group of 80 people with 56 dogs started to walk.

The big group soon split into smaller pieces. People found their rhythm and buddies, and so did the dogs.

Some dogs preferred the safe space on the lead beside their humans, others took the chance to run free - they obviously did the walk several times by running, jumping, searching and sniffing.

We passed frozen fields with misty sunlight. Then we went through forests and of course a lot of mud.

Some dogs enjoyed every metre, others liked to pass over the mud in their human's arms.

After 8 km and two hours we arrived back where we started. Happy and tired from the walk and the cold.

A little coffee or tea, a snack and a little raffle completed the day.

Happy humans and happy dogs.

## Madeleine Bath \*

My poor ankles and left knee are protesting today. They say they were over used yesterday, slipping in the mud. I was jolly pleased I wore wellies.

What an excellent event you organised. So very well attended too so the publicity worked. I spotted the poster in various places and Fabienne had primed ICI Perigord radio. That must have helped.

Thank you to whoever marked the route with red and white tape. So well placed. Clear, easy to follow maps too. Without all that preparation, I for one, would have got lost in the woods.

Congratulations to whoever arranged the crisp, dry sunny weather. After a freezing start, we walked on a lovely day. I always marvel at the way all the different breeds and ages of dogs get along so well.

It was a great experience for *Tao* my recently rescued Spanish Galgo. He likes dogs but is usually terrified by people. I was pleased to see him accept touches from strangers without freaking. But then, they were all dog friendly Phoenix people. So, thank you guys for all the hard work.

I am keeping fingers crossed that loads of money was raised.