

## Curiouser and Curiouser - **Barkin HeARTS** – Tampa’s Trip Down the Rabbit Hole

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Take one diminutive, fresh-faced brunette who is self-described as “creative, unorthodox and a dreamer” who looks like she’s pushing voting age rather than twenty-six, add a passion for dogs, combined with the energy of the Energizer Bunny and an eclectic bunch of talent and volunteers. Out of this diverse and assorted mix comes Barkin heARTS, a playfully eccentric Alice in Wonderland-themed canine fundraiser 7pm on April 26<sup>th</sup> unlike anything that Tampa has ever seen before and hosted by the birthday girl herself, Johnna.

The inspiration for Barkin HeARTS came from the 2007 passing of Razzie, a four-legged friend Johnna rescued from a puppy mill that had a heart defect. To test Tampa’s creative receptiveness, Johnna placed an ad for event volunteers on Craigslist and was thrilled to be completely inundated with positive responses. Johnna explained, “It really did only start out as a party to end my quarter life crisis and it took on a life of its own and escalated into this huge event. I received amazing support and now it’s bigger than I could have dreamed.”

An entrepreneur from a very young age, Johnna is a talented interior designer that appears to know nearly every creative individual in Tampa Bay. Her passion and excitement for Barkin HeARTS has made imaginative artists eager to donate their time and talents to this event in efforts to raise money for Dogma, a newly-formed dog rescue and the event’s recipient.

“I choose Dogma because they are energetic and passionate about what they do. They are full time working women going above and beyond what is needed and I feel very passionate about helping Dogma. As a young entrepreneur, I know how hard it is starting up and felt I had an opportunity to incorporate them and make a difference. It makes all the work so much more rewarding to know that I am doing this for a great cause,” explained Johnna. “I have the chance to combine all my greatest passions into one: entrepreneurial women, small business networking, the creative talent that is in Tampa, and rescuing animals. I’m doing Barkin HeARTS to give back to everyone that has inspired me and made my time in Tampa enjoyable because I was a Kentucky girl that moved here and never left. My parents just moved here and I’m very excited to show them all of my favorite things about Tampa in one location. I want to share all this with everyone and have a great time doing it in loving memory of my tuxedo pom, Razzie.”

What Johnna has planned for Barkin HeARTS is similar to falling into a rabbit hole into a Wonderland. “With the movie coming out, I thought this was the perfect theme for our event. We have local artists, interactive exhibits, live body painters and make-up artists; creative installations hung from the rafters, a fashion show and dog parade that includes some of the dog adoptables; local food and drinks and lounge seating so that you can experience and enjoy something magical for a good cause. You can have

your caricature drawn in Alice in Wonderland and enter top hat design competition. Costumes are encouraged. This promises not just to be the event to go to, but an event that you can be a part of.”

Johnna’s only goal for Barkin HeARTS is simple: “I hope everyone has a blast and that we can come together to escape our crazy everyday life and have fun for a great cause. Even if one person comes and one dollar is donated, we are that much closer to saving a *barkin heart*. I would be happy with that.”

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**How can someone help the organization?**

Attend Barkin HeARTS on April 24 at The Heights Tampa, 1902 N. Highland Avenue, Tampa. The cost is \$10.00 online or \$15.00 per person at the door. Adults only, no pets please. Valet parking, food and portions of the drink money all go TO Dogma. Dogma is always in need of dog supplies, toys, dog food blankets and foster families. Fan us on Facebook to help us get in contact with other supporters and give us the opportunity to reach out to you. To purchase tickets and for more information, visit [www.barkinhearts.com](http://www.barkinhearts.com).

Always rescue.