

By Susan O'Leary – Times Correspondent



THOMAS QUINN | THE TIMES Members of the I 80 GO! kite club fly their formation of quad kites Saturday during the Kites and Canines Festival at Sunset Hill Park.

VALPARAISO | Most would think it takes a lot of wind to fly an 88-foot kite.

But too much wind grounded the monster kite Saturday morning at Spring Out to Sunset: Kites, Canines, and More at Sunset Hill Farm County Park in Valparaiso.

Tony and Ann Killip, of Wataga, Ill., struggled to keep the huge kite, shaped like a trilobyte, aloft.

"A trilobyte is an ancient sea creature," Tony Killip said.

The Killips, who always keep an eye on the weather, estimated that wind gusts reached 35 mph Saturday morning. They said kite flying works best with 10 to 20 mph winds.

"We're taking a break," Killip said. "It gets tiresome trying to fight that thing."

The event, formerly the Kites and Canines Festival, featured professional kite flying demonstrations and dog Frisbee-catching performances, courtesy of the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department.

"We wanted an inexpensive option for families to come out and have fun," said Gayle O'Connor, the parks' supervisor of recreation. "We want to grow with this every year."

Festival visitors were encouraged to bring kites and dogs for a day of fun at the park.

Amy Hartz, the park department's wellness educator, snuggled her pug, Max, who had a hard time keeping his eyes open.

"He's been very sleepy this morning," said Hartz, who helped organize the event. "He's been up since 7:30."

A team of four stunt kite flyers named 180 Go! kept their smaller kites flying in formation in the blustery weather. The group performs throughout the Midwest at kite festivals and other events.

Canine units from the Porter County Sheriff's Department and the Valparaiso Police Department and local pet rescues and shelters also greeted visitors.

Don Lang, of Indy Dog and Disc, a club for Frisbee-catching dogs and their owners, walked with Lily, his 7-year-old Australian shepherd mix, before her disc-catching performance.

Lang said the club also hosts and participates in competitions throughout the Midwest.

"I got into this by accident," Lang said of his hobby. "I never played Frisbee when I was young. Now I'm 70 years old and I'm still doing this."