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Greg MacDonald Photo

Mandy Storey of Dog Gone Walking, a pet care business,

Pet walking company turns 10

By Greg MacDonald, Chronicle Staff

In her 10 years running a dog-walking business, Waterloo resident Mandy Storey has learned to never underestimate a canine.

The lesson was cemented one day, more than five years ago, when the owner of Dog Gone Walking saw a dog display a unique skillset at the leash-free park.



“I didn’t know a dog could climb an eight-foot fence,” Storey said.

“I was there with a bunch of dogs, and one got right up for the fence.

“He climbed out of the leash-free park. Luckily he didn’t go far.”

Storey has seen many unique dogs in her decade running Dog Gone Walking — the business has more than 1,200 customers in Waterloo Region.

Dogs are walked individually or as part of a group.

Dog Gone Walking designs each pet’s exercise regime to match its personality — walks can be on trails, in parks, leashed or in off-leash parks.

“Some dogs have been walking together for seven or eight years,” she said. “They’re buddies.”

Storey started the business after losing her job.

“I always loved animals, but I was a flight attendant,” Storey said. “When the airline went bankrupt, I decided I wanted to something with animals.”

At first, she did the walking.

After five years of building Dog Gone Walking, Storey retired from walking and now works from home.

She has five dedicated employees who walk dogs seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Business is booming. Storey finds that the company's reputation precedes it and people are quick to trust her with their pets.

"We're referred by the vets in the area and I think that's a good thing, it shows we're trustworthy," she said.

Storey and her employees have worked hard to build that trust with clients. For some people, pets are like children.

That means Dog Gone Walking is a bit like a daycare.

"Our communication is key. We all have BlackBerries and are easy to get ahold of," Storey said.

"If a client moves their pet food, we know. Everyone on our staff knows it's been moved."

Each walker also leaves behind a detailed note after every visit to let clients know of any concerns, questions or cute stories.

Dog Gone Walking also caters to different doggy demeanors.

Both private and group walking sessions are available.

"We do an acquaintance session where we get to meet the dog and they get to meet the walker as well," Storey said. "That lets us know if the dog is friendly."

Each visit costs \$18 during the week, and \$24 on weekends or after 6 p.m. on weekdays.

Dog Gone Walking is not limited to dogs.

The company also does cat care and other pet visits.

"Any other pet we do as well — Guinea pigs, rats, ferrets, turtles," Storey said.

Dog Gone Walking is also available to dispense medication to diabetic cats or other sick animals.

But the core of the business is still dog walking.

Though there is an opportunity for growth, Storey doesn't know if she wants to expand too quickly.

She has two young children and wants to make sure there's still room for both business and family.

"I've always said bigger is not always better," Storey said. "We could expand, but I like it the way it is now. It's still personable, it's still local."

With the smaller client base comes more intimacy, Storey said.

"We've seen bachelors get married, have children. We see some of our clients' dogs pass away. We see them get new dogs," she said.

"We see them in all phases of life."

Pet visit and dog walking service 519-884-WALK (9255)

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