

Dog Walking Business Makes Great Strides

Waterloo Region Record - Kitchener, Ont.

Author: Barrick, Frances

Date: Jul 22, 2009

Start Page: C.1

Section: BUSINESS

Kitchener realtor Mary Bales is too busy to walk her two dogs every afternoon.

The solution is Dog Gone Walking, a pet-care business started seven years ago by Mandy Storey.

"They do a great job," Bales says. "They love and look after the dogs and give them the exercise in the middle of the day, which I am not able to do."

Bales is one of more than 700 people who use Storey's service, which includes daily dog walks, cat care and extras like taking pets to their grooming appointments or veterinary visits.

"People don't realize how much they need the service" until they start using it, says Storey, who runs the business from her Waterloo home.

Other customers include university professors, company executives and people on holidays. Most live in Kitchener and Waterloo and the surrounding area.

"It actually has surpassed our expectations," Storey says of the business.

The 33-year-old South African native started the business after she lost her job as a flight attendant because the airline went bankrupt.

Another flight attendant had a similar business in Toronto and the idea of being outdoors and walking dogs appealed to Storey, who has a golden retriever named Murphy.

The first year, she had only 60 customers and lost money. The second year, she broke even.

Storey pondered quitting at times after the birth of her daughter, Taylor, four years ago, and her son, Ryan, three years later. She found it difficult to juggle her busy family life with the demands of running a business out of her home.

"Constantly being on call was really tough. You couldn't take a vacation," she says. "It has not been easy. We really persevered."

Today, she has five employees who are walkers.

Storey attributes her success to attention to detail. The details include leaving behind dog treats and notes titled Pawsitive Tails that outline how the visit went, the dog's behaviour and what the dog ate.

For vacationers, Storey's employees bring in the mail, water the plants and turn on exterior lights at night, in addition to caring for pets.

"It comes down to attention to detail to be successful," she says. "Anybody can walk a dog."

While 90 per cent of her business is dog walking, Storey is building up her cat clientele. Her services include giving insulin to diabetic cats. She even cares for a snake.

Her fees are \$16.98 for a 30-minute dog walk during the day, and \$23.98 for walks in the evenings or on weekends. It costs \$16.98 to take a pet to a chiropractor, kennel or groomer, and \$16.98 to feed a cat, clean up its litter box, water plants and bring in the mail.

Some clients, like Bales, use the service daily. Others use only the holiday service, which includes three daily visits for \$45 a day.

"I could grow bigger if I wanted to. I could expand to Cambridge and Guelph, but bigger is not always better," Storey says. "I am quite content with how it is right now."

Dog Gone Walking

Phone: 519-884-9255

Address: Waterloo

Email: info@doggonewalking.ca

Web: www.doggonewalking.ca

Employees: 5

Credit: Record staff