

Pooches are pampered at couple's day care

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Having a dog's life just got a whole lot better, thanks to an enterprising Palm Beach Gardens couple.

Creating pooch paradise was a labor of love for Tracy McCord and her husband Matt, who recently opened the Palm Beach Paw Spa in Jupiter. They got the idea when they became disillusioned with the boarding options available for their beloved Wheaten terrier, Murphy.



Cydney Scott/The Post

Tracy and Matt McCord own and operate Palm Beach Paw Spa in Jupiter. They got the idea when they became disillusioned with the boarding options available for their Wheaten terrier Murphy.

"We thought that there must be a better way to board your pets," Tracy McCord said.

It was one of those situations where everything just came together and left McCord feeling that owning a dog spa was her fate all along.

"We started talking about it and talking about it and every question led us down a path," she said. "As we researched more, everything started coming together."

The doors opened Oct. 1, but the process began a good year earlier. McCord researched close to 1,000 similar businesses, then took her data to a counselor at the Service Corps of Retired Executives.

The counselor was encouraging about the endeavor, so the McCords kept moving forward with their plan.

"We decided that we were going to go until we hit a brick wall," McCord said.

The brick wall never happened. They found 4,500 square feet in the Pennock Industrial Park off Indiantown Road and went to work. Family and friends pitched in, helping with interior decorating and web and logo design.

The result is a center with 2,000 square feet of air-conditioned play areas and plenty of room for the pets to romp and play. The business serves as a doggy day care and an overnight boarding site.

The McCords threw in a few extras, such as a movie area where pooped-out pooches can relax and take in a showing of *101 Dalmatians*.

"People ask us if they really watch the movies and yes, they do," said McCord, who credits her husband with coming up with most of the unusual touches. "It has a lot to do with Matt's creative mind. We both look at the same thing and I see one thing and he sees 10 things."

The McCords met when they both were working at Florida Power & Light. She was an environmental specialist and he was a mechanical engineer. Both have always loved and owned animals, and they carried that love one step further when they began training Murphy to be a therapy dog, an idea McCord attributes to her older sister, who has scleroderma, an autoimmune system disease.

"We trained Murphy to be a therapy dog so he could be around (my sister) ... she really is my inspiration."

Murphy was trained at Safe Harbor Animal Sanctuary and now that the McCords have the center, they donate their space to Safe Harbor for evening training classes.

"They come every night and they can stay as long as they need to," McCord said.

The Paw Spa is staffed around the clock and the dogs are walked every two to three hours. Only dogs that have been vaccinated and spayed or neutered will be accepted.

"And we only accept friendly breeds," said McCord, adding that their goal is for them to be comfortable and safe.

For more information on Palm Beach Paw Spa, call (561) 741-0022 or visit their Web site at www.palmbeachpawspa.com. For information on Safe Harbor Animal Sanctuary's training classes, call (561) 308-9651.