



Tammy Rosen made a business out of her love for her golden retriever, Hunter

Must Love Dogs

Tammy Rosen Fur-Gets Her Corporate Days for Dog Days

Who would give up a six-figure salary in the glamorous IT world to start a business taking care of pets when their owners are away? A woman who must love dogs.

Tammy Rosen, founder of Fur-Get Me Not, a full-service pet-care facility in Arlington, gave up a lucrative job at Sprint to fulfill her dream of owning her own business. She wanted to explore her passion for canine behavior and, as one might guess, to spend more time with her dog.

Originally striving to work in the dog training field, Rosen saw a way to build a client base while she worked on her certification. She began working out of her home in December 2000, cat sitting while working fulltime as a software developer for Sprint. After only a year of cat sitting, she knew she had stumbled upon something she found could be both profitable and rewarding. She left her IT position in 2001. With 25 full-time customers, she started her pet sitting business full force.

"It was a big risk, but I was confident that the client base was there and the business was there as long as I could provide a quality service," says Rosen. Her dog walking and pet sitting businesses took off due to the high demand in this area for this type of service.

"It sort of blossomed and became its own business," she says.

Blossomed? More like burst at the seams. Rosen's initial home-based pet sitting service would be the beginning of a one-stop-shop-pet-care business that serviced over 1800 customers in its first five years. In 2003, realizing her home could no longer sustain the growing business, Rosen opened her current 3000-square-foot indoor dog daycare and training facility in South Arlington.

“Daycare goes hand-in-hand with training because a lot of the common behavior problems dogs experience are due to the fact that they don’t have an outlet. So launching daycare provided a two-fold approach to solving some common dog behavior problems,” says Rosen, a certified pet dog trainer. The dogs learn to socialize with other dogs and people and get the exercise they need, no matter how long their owners are at work everyday.

It was a big risk, but I was confident that the client base was there and the business was there as long as I could provide a quality service

TAMMY ROSEN, FOUNDER OF FUR-GET ME NOT

Rosen, a Northern Virginia native, believes that in a metro area like ours, the success of dog-centric businesses like Fur-Get Me Not is a result of changing times. The more time people devote to their careers and the more they wait to have kids, the more demand there is for these services. While some pet-care businesses specialize in one or two services, Fur-Get Me Not offers a range that includes: midday walks, overnight pet sitting, pet taxiing, dog training, mobile grooming, boarding, do-it-yourself bathing, and perhaps the most fun of all—dog birthday parties.

Alexandria resident Alicia Gable has taken advantage of most Fur-Get Me Not’s services. Her two-year-old Labrador retriever, Jasper, has been enrolled in daycare since he was a puppy.

“People feel bad when they leave their dog all day,” she says. “It’s nice to have them in a safe and fun environment where they can get adequate exercise and play with

the other dogs as opposed to being stuck in a crate all day.”

Recently enrolling his coonhound, Maddie, in daycare, James Alpert says it relieves the guilt of not taking her to the dog park everyday. “She is the only dog in the family. I have to keep her socialized,” he states. When he picks up Maddie he gets a daily report card, keeping him up-to-date on how while she is playing with the other dogs in her playgroup.”

Though the staff comes from many different backgrounds, they are all well-trained and treat the dogs as if they were their own. Daycare Manager Heather Morris went to culinary school and uses her food science knowledge to make dog treats and dog birthday cakes.

“We all have a connection with the dogs. You really bond with them, and it’s a lot of fun to see how they all interact with one another. And, of course, we all have our favorites,” smiles Morris (who must be referring to her Dalmatian, Lottie).

Rosen believes that her success would not have been possible without her canine-loving team. Her first employee, George Hobart, is still with her today. An Arlington resident for the last 44 years, Hobart finds that dog walking fits nicely with his retirement and uses it to keep his 70-year-old body in shape. One of the most requested dog walkers on staff, he grows very attached to the pets he

takes care of. “When one of them moves away it’s very traumatic,” admits Hobart.

Hobart has had his fair share of adventures on the job. He has received several injuries as a result of overexcited dogs and icy walks, and once he had to revive an old terrier who fainted after he saw an approaching pit bull.

Comparing his duty to that of the postal service, he laughs, “Neither rain, nor sleet, nor hail, nor gloom of night, can stay this walker from his appointed rounds.”

Even as Fur-Get Me Not continues to expand with a new D.C. facility in the works and dog walking and pet sitting services already available there, Rosen is certain that the small business feel will be unconditional.

“We know our clients on a first name basis. The intimacy of the business will always remain. I think that’s what makes us so successful.”

Rosen’s golden retriever, Hunter, the company’s mascot, is with her everyday, whether she is at the facility or working from home. “Hunter goes everywhere I go. When I have to work from home he gets very disappointed: ‘Why am I not in day care today?’ He has a certain set of friends he plays with.”

Along with the rest of her staff, Rosen agrees that the best part of the job is that you can bring your dog to work with you. “When you work with pets it’s just a whole new playing field. You are surrounded by pet lovers, both your employees and your clients.”

And of course, the more the business grows, the more friends for Hunter. 🐾

For more information

www.furgetmenotpetcare.com