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Poppy, left, and Gil patiently wait for a treat at WeeOnes, a B&B for small breed dogs. Nancy Abood and Kimberley Kincaid opened the boarding kennel in their home last summer, catering to littler dogs that can sometimes get overwhelmed by bigger dogs./Photo by Jennaye Derge

Bigger not always better

Small dogs get their day at WeeOnes

by **Jen Reeder**

While 2015 is the Year of the Sheep according to the Chinese zodiac, in Durango it will undoubtedly be another Year of the Dog. The latest sign that

Durango has gone to the dogs? The opening of WeeOnes B&B&B, a boarding facility for toy breeds.

“All dogs carry that magic, it’s just that they come in different size packages,” says Nancy Abood, who opened WeeOnes in July 2014 with her partner, Kimberly Kincaid.

“Some are just easier to pick up,” adds Kincaid with a laugh.

Unlike traditional boarding kennels, Abood and Kincaid operate WeeOnes from their home. The idea is that small dogs can be overwhelmed by big dogs in a boarding play yard, so they might be more comfortable living the life of a lap dog in someone’s home while their owners are away.

Often WeeOnes “guests” are dropped off with overnight bags with special sweaters, thunder jackets to reduce anxiety during storms, special treats to be fed at specific times, and medications.

“We’re not just dealing with people’s dogs, we’re dealing with their family,” Kincaid says. “Whatever you want – as long as it’s not detrimental to the pet – we’ll do it. We’ll cook for them if you need us to.”

Even the business name – WeeOnes B&B&B stands for “Bed & Board & Bark!” – caters to preferences of small dog owners.

“This is for little dogs, and we’ll be as cutesy as you want with it,” Kincaid says.

She said Wee Ones houses a maximum of five guests at a time “so everyone gets quality time.” There are gates in the kitchen to separate excited “humpers” from the pack, and a back yard for bathroom breaks (which is sanitized every day), but often the dogs are on the couch or a lap. Both women are usually at their computers or in the kitchen, so dogs are rarely – if ever – alone. Many of Kincaid’s children live in Durango and visit, and her mother lives with them most of the year.

“Mother is in Texas for the winter but the rest of the time she sits in a special chair and crochets and watches basketball, and there are always dogs in her lap,” Kincaid says with a grin. “A lot of our dogs are accustomed to somebody in their 70s, and they just gravitate to Mom.”

Abood and Kincaid stay in contact with pet owners, texting and emailing photos or videos of the wee ones hanging out on a lap, or interacting with their own pets. Their dogs Clay and Gil socialize with their visiting pups, and even 17-year-old cat Cash and turtle Shelly forge unlikely friendships. A little Yorkie named Missy whose parents thought she hated cats loves to nap while cuddling with Cash, and a Bishon Frise named Burton wants to be with Shelly all the time (and barks like crazy when she eventually moves).

“He’d never seen a turtle before,” Kincaid says. “It’s a cute little friendship they’ve got going.”

Using dog psychology is another key element to making the dogs feel comfortable. First-time clients must have a pre-visit meeting to introduce the dogs to the environment and then allow them to leave with their owners, so when they come back, they don’t feel stressed because they know the stay is temporary.

Kincaid and Abood, who became friends in junior high school in Iowa, both worked with animals for decades before “retiring” to open WeeOnes. Kincaid started training dogs when she was just 7 years old, and went on to become an animal behaviorist with a pet grooming business and a volunteer dog handler with a local Search and Rescue team.

“I love (working with dogs) so much,” Kincaid says. “It’s afforded me a good life. I’ve never felt like I’ve had to work.”

Abood worked for Kincaid for eight years before moving into management of a chain of pet supply stores. Her brother went to college in Durango and she’d visited regularly for 40 years before she and Kincaid moved here four years ago (they’ve been together for 20 years). She said Durango has come a long way in its “dog thinking.”

“When I used to come here, every dog was just loose in the back of a pickup truck that had a gun rack,” she says. “Now there are dogs on trails, you see the dogs out in stores, there’s a dog park, hotels welcome dogs ... they’re finding out that dog is good business.”

And WeeOnes already has a thriving business thanks to positive word of mouth. Bayfield resident Bonita Ratliff says she and her husband, Jim, have four sons between them, so their dogs Joleen, a Chihuahua, and Tessie, a Pomeranian/ Chihuahua mix, are their “little girls.” In six years, Joleen had never needed to be boarded, but when the couple had a family emergency, they gave WeeOnes a try.

“We had to make some trips to Denver, and we couldn’t take our babies,” Ratliff says.

She had a lot of reservations about being separated from the dogs, but her nerves were calmed during the pre-visit.

“The home is spotless, and their back yard is just wonderful. It’s arranged perfectly for this,” she says. “The thought of (the dogs) not being by themselves at all – that’s so reassuring.”

When it was boarding time, the Ratliffs had planned to slip away while the dogs were distracted, but Kincaid suggested an alternative.

“Kim said, ‘We’re going to hold your babies and they’re going to watch you drive away. That way, the dogs won’t start looking for you,’” Ratliff says. “It was sad leaving them, but Kim and Nancy each had a puppy in their hand and they were saying, ‘Tell Mom and Dad bye!’ We were so taken by that.”

They also enjoyed receiving photos of their dogs while they were gone. Now they recommend WeeOnes to their friends.

“I tell them, ‘You will love the place. It’s just like home,’” Ratliff says. “I can’t say enough about the place.”

For their part, Kincaid and Abood are grateful to have clients entrust wee ones to their care, and to have found a new home in Durango.

“Durango is such a wonderful community for people with animals,” Abood says.



A lap dog’s paradise, WeeOnes co-owner Nancy Abood holds a client’s yorkie, Gunner, while his partner Radar awaits a turn. WeeOnes houses only up to five pups at a time to ensure every dog gets quality people time – and vice versa./Photo by Jennaye Derge

For more information about WeeOnes B&B, visit www.weeonesbbb.com.

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