

4-Legged Friends offers daycare for pets

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Busy families and single pet owners turn to doggie daycare centers as an alternative to leaving their canine friends at home during the day.

At 4-Legged Friends, a center operated by co-owners Chris Towns and Kim Thomas of Farmington, it's not just a matter of dropping off your pet, however. Dogs must be at least four months old, be spayed or neutered (or will be soon), be able to play nicely with other dogs and humans, share toys with others, and not be protective of food, toys or space. They must be up-to-date on all shots, including Bordetella (kennel cough), DHLPP and rabies.

A scheduled interview is conducted, a questionnaire must be filled out and dogs are

observed. Questions are asked: How does the dog react to other dogs? How does the dog play with other dogs? Has it played with other dogs? How does it react on a walk?

Two daycare dogs are brought up to watch how the applicant dog gets along and fits in. Oliver, "a socializer and is sort of a gatekeeper," Towns said, is a mix of chocolate Labrador Retriever, German Shepherd and Great Dane. The owners rely on him to see whether the new dog will be accepted in the pack.

Oliver attends three days a week and started coming almost from the center's opening.

"We have dogs who really don't want to interact or are picky about who they interact with and that's fine," Towns

said. "They still have a really great time. There's a lot of room if they want to go back there and find their own little space and just hang out."

Dogs don't have to come every day but Towns asks that they come regularly. Cost is \$25 a day. The Biscuit Club, a pre-paid program, allows pet owners to purchase 10 visits and get the 11th visit free.

"This is not the place you call and say, 'We're getting new carpeting. Can you take our dog for three days?'"

The daycare is the only tenant of the building at 33400 Nine Mile Road in Farmington, just east of Farmington Road. 4-Legged Friends takes up 4,000 square feet, and another room is also available for a veterinary practice and grooming business.

Owners are members of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers and certified in Red Cross Pet First Aid.

Hours are 7 a.m.-7 p.m., Monday through Thursday; 7 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday.

Dog training classes are offered "because dogs re not born with English as a first language, understanding what you mean by a sit-stay," the owners said.

For more information, call (248) 774-4100 or visit www.4-leggedfriendsdaycare.com

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Information for Road Watch is supplied by the Road Commission for Oakland County (www.roccweb.org). Information is subject to change.

ROAD WATCH

FARMINGTON

■ Road: Farmington Road, south of Nine Mile to Grand River — This section of Farmington is closed to southbound traffic as the RCOOC reconstructs and widens the road. During the project, the detour route for

southbound traffic is Grand River, Drake and Nine Mile. Motorists traveling northbound on Farmington should expect delays and are encouraged to use the detour route as well. Completion is expected Sept. 30.

■ Road: 12 Mile at Orchard Lake Road — RCOOC is widening this intersection (adding a right-turn lane on eastbound 12 Mile). Completion is expected Aug. 8.

MASSAGE

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more money," Noveckey said. "Generally I come to them because animals do a lot better in their own surroundings."

Office calls are about \$25. She covers the general area of Farmington, Farmington Hills, Southfield, Royal Oak, Birmingham and Ferndale.

"I'm not in it to make money, obviously, I just love doing it," Noveckey said. "I charge a flat rate, but I don't have a specified time except for (at 4-Legged Friends). Animals determine the length of their session."

Bonding and getting animals to trust is the first step, she said.

"Touch is therapeutic and it is nonjudgmental," Noveckey said. "It's a relaxing experience. Society doesn't teach about touch. It's taboo to touch people, hug or shake hands or anything."

One of the most important aspects of massage is touch. Through touch, emotional grief, daily stress and depression can greatly be relieved by one soul connecting with another soul, Noveckey said. Massage incorporates vari-

ous techniques and modalities to release muscles and relax the body. These techniques help stimulate blood circulation and lymphatic fluids, which help remove toxin build-up from the body, she said.

"These toxins are replaced with important nutrients such as calcium and phosphorus, creating an environment to alleviate skin disorders, muscular cramps and stiffness," Noveckey said.

She is a placement director at Irene's Myomassage Institute, which recently relocated to Southfield at 26061 Franklin Road at Telegraph.

She also took a pet massage class there.

Noveckey talked about pet massage as she worked on Oliver, chocolate Labrador mix at 4-Legged Friends Daycare. By the time Noveckey was through, Oliver was chilling.

She starts at the head. "They love having their ears pulled," Noveckey said.

She tries to find tight muscles and knots in the neck. "It feels like a rock," Noveckey said.

"It's good to get between their ribs, there's a lot of muscles there. By helping to soften and relieve some of those, it helps them to breathe better."

"Working around joints is beneficial for big dogs."

"Owners don't touch every part of their dog," Noveckey said.

" Oftentimes I will find something they didn't know was there. I'll find marks or sores they didn't know they had."

Increased blood circulation is also important for lethargic animals, elderly animals, and those who are suffering from impaired heart or kidney function, she said.

Increased circulation brings with it oxygen, which is a key component in healing injuries and sore joints and also reducing inflammation caused by arthritis or hip dysplasia.

"Our animal friends experience these same problems and benefit emotionally and physically, just as we do from the valuable experience of therapeutic massage," Noveckey said.

Reneh Noveckey at (248) 872-7561.

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