

NOVEMBER 2023



mission *Kansas*



EMPIRE PETS SALON & BOUTIQUE

EXPERIENCE AND CARE COME
TOGETHER AT EMPIRE PETS

Page 6

GO PET GO

WHEN LOOKING FOR NEW KINDS OF PET
CARE, GO PET GO IS THE PLACE TO GO

Page 10

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I am a locally owned Franchisee in KC with 41 years of experience in pizza and delivery. We purchased the Mission, Overland Park, Olathe, and Shawnee stores. I have worked in many different markets and believe we will be a hit in Kansas City Soon! I started with Domino's in high school as a delivery driver and managed my first store as a senior in high school. As a GM in stores I learned change happens and you need to roll with it. I managed stores with Domino's all over the Texas market and Supervised in Houston. Became a Franchisee in 1999 in Sweetwater TX and grew to 3 stores in just 4 months. I now have 11 stores and am working on reopening stores in KC as well as a few new stores in Texas. I say this not to boast about myself but if you are looking for a career

then you can do the same as myself with hard work and a well to learn.

I have brought Peter Toal in as a partner in KC, and he will be living in your market and taking full ownership within the next few years. Peter has many years of experience as well and I have great trust in him to help move the market in the right direction.

For those of you that have had bad service over the past we are very sorry and would like a new chance. I believe we need to hire and hire the right people. With that being said we offer a great job but we have to have great people. As you can see below, we are offering a great deal and great benefits.

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HAPPY FALL FROM THE CITY OF MISSION!

I don't know about you, but I'm finding it hard to believe that 2024 is just around the corner! I've been looking forward to this "pet-themed" issue of the Mission Magazine since the beginning of the year.

If we've ever talked one-on-one, you've probably heard about our two "foster fail" chihuahua mixes that run our household – Wags and Wonton. Animal companions are near and dear to my heart. I'm a big believer in "adopt don't shop" and together Dave and I have fostered 35+ dogs to help them find their forever homes. It's great to read in this issue about all of the supporting businesses in Mission that can help you to have a happy and healthy pet! To me, pets are family.

We've long understood the mental health benefits that pet ownership can bring. Joy, companionship, stress relief, humor, comfort and peace just to name a few. Personally, few things make me happier than snuggling up on the couch on a cool fall day with my two furballs, or taking them on a walk around the neighborhood. I think you'll find the stories in this issue entertaining, as well as enlightening, as we highlight just a few of the pet-related things about our community.

You may have driven past the business in our cover feature and never even noticed them! Empire Pets is a full service grooming salon tucked into the Mission West Center on Martway. Owner Teri Aalders and her staff groom more than 35-40 dogs a day. So many dogs in fact that they created a special "cats only" day to create a more relaxed environment for our feline friends. I think you'll enjoy reading about their fun and creative work environment!

Just east of Lamar along Johnson Drive, you'll find Go Pet Go, one of owner Tim Peterson's four metro area stores. Go Pet



Go specializes in high quality pet foods, and Tim prides himself in being able to share his knowledge with his customers. The store also offers self-service bathing and grooming stations and a wide variety of treats and other accessories. Peterson says many local residents enjoy being able to walk in a select a treat for their pet. We've bought several items there, including Wags' collar!

Next, this issue will introduce you to Moose, a therapy/service dog serving Rushton Elementary School. Moose is beloved by both students and staff and even has his own social medial presence! Rushton's social worker Cathy Lorino credits Moose with great intuition in knowing just which kids need a little extra attention. Dogs are the best helpers, and I think you'll soon see why Moose is more than just the "teacher's pet." I've now got a new Instagram account to follow - @Moosethedoodle1.

You'll also get to read about Dubdog Designs, a great local business with a strong national presence, specializing in custom collars and leashes. Be sure to read the article to see which companions of KC celebrities are sporting their designs! I find their work with KC Pet Project especially touching. Newly-adopted rescue dogs should get to look sharp, too!

Our last feature story highlights the special ways that local businesses and The Mission Project have developed strong and lasting relationships through the years. Once you hear about these connections, you'll never doubt how special our community truly is.

Look forward to hearing more about Mission's four-legged residents as you read and enjoy this issue of the magazine!

-Sollie Flora, Mayor



On the cover:

Empire Pets keeps pets looking their best.

Photo by
Kathy Delorenzo

Additional copies of the Mission Magazine are available at participating advertisers. You can also view it on the City's website, www.missionks.org. To advertise in Mission Magazine, contact Angie Riffel at 913.951.8446 or ariffel@metromediapublishers.com. If you have a story idea, contact Laura Smith at 913.676.8352 or lsmith@missionks.org.

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Kash, whose "human" is groomer Christine, can often be seen sporting various colored stripes. Empire's staff uses pet safe dyes which wash out after a few weeks.

A SPECIAL SHOUTOUT TO MISSION'S PETS!

If there is one proven truth in life, it's that people love their pets. This issue of Mission Magazine focuses on some local people and businesses who work with our four-legged friends. Pampering our pets is an American institution and we will be looking at several different ways pets enhance our everyday lives. So, round up your furry companions and share some of these local stories.

Experience and care come together at *Empire Pets* Salon & Boutique

By Kris Baker • Photos by Kathy DeLorenzo

You could say grooming pets is in the DNA of Teri Aalders. She started grooming her poodle puppy when she was a teenager. Her mother raised poodles, and Aalders couldn't wait to learn how to practice some hands-on care of those dogs. It even became a family tradition: Aalders has three sisters in the Kansas City area, and they all own dog salons.

Aalders took over ownership of Empire Pets Salon & Boutique 23 years ago, and the business now sits as one of the oldest dog salons in the Kansas City area. Her business has grown, and they groom 35

to 40 dogs every day. There were so many dogs she decided they had to make a separate day of the week just for cats.

"So many of our 'doggie' clients push the gate open to come in," Aalders said. "We treat our clients and their pets like our favorite aunts and uncles. They are all family."

Showing some pure-bred know how, Aalders has dabbled in the show dog side of things as well. She has done prep grooming for some show Kerry Blue Terriers and English Springer Spaniels. The dogs she has worked with have won plenty of ribbons, but she describes herself as more of a fan.

"I do stay in touch with show people,"

Aalders said. "I have quite a few friends with show poodles. I have two poodles myself, a standard and a toy. We closed the shop this year to attend the Heart of America dog show at the old Kemper

"We treat our clients and their pets like our favorite aunts and uncles. They are all family"
--Teri Aalders, owner



In Empire's salon dogs undergo a beauty transformation. Owner Teri Aalders and her team work on customs cuts for dogs of all sizes.



Arena in March. It's a great learning experience for my groomers. In today's grooming we see a lot of 'doodles' and other mix breeds. It's nice to see an auditorium full of pure-bred dogs."

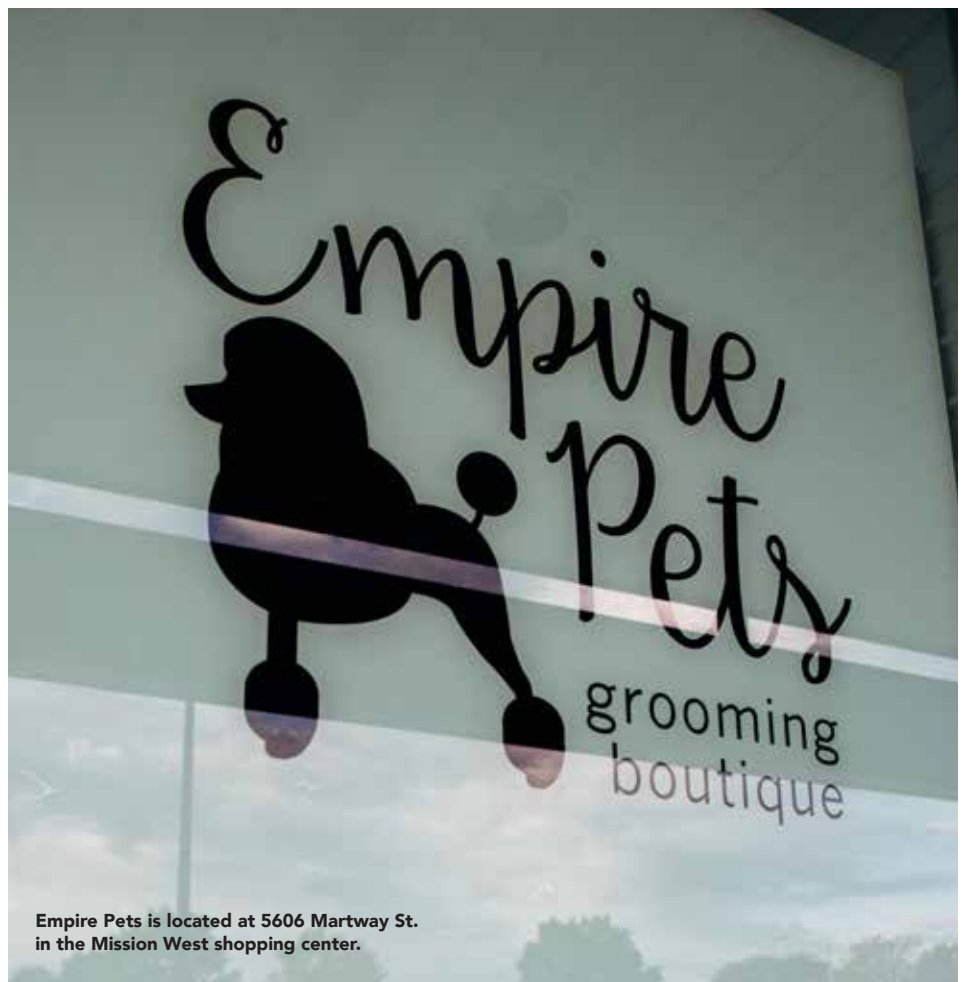
Aalders also spent a few years as the Director of Grooming at Pawsperity (formerly The Grooming Project), a nonprofit grooming school in Kansas City, Missouri. Her goal was to pass along her passion for taking care of the animals she grooms to the people coming there to learn.

"The school teaches people coming from impoverished families to learn the skill of grooming and help place them in local salons," she said. "I was there for almost three years. I left in January of 2020. Anyway, after 40 years in this business I have done a lot of different things, even groomed in New York for a couple of years."

Aalders said she enjoyed her time in New York, but it is Mission, Kansas that has won her Best in Show.

"Mission is great," Aalders said. "It's a small-town feel. It's friendly. We know lots of people and lots of people know us. We wanted to create a happy place to groom your dog, and I think we did that."

For more information on Empire Pets Salon & Boutique visit their website at empirepetsboutique.com or come to their store at 6506 Martway St. Mission, Kansas.



Empire Pets is located at 5606 Martway St. in the Mission West shopping center.



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When looking for new kinds of pet care, Go Pet Go is the place to go

By Kris Baker • Photos by Kathy DeLorenzo

Most all pet owners agree what we feed our dogs and cats is incredibly important. However, the area of pet food has long been understudied by experts. Recently, new innovations in pet food and selections with higher quality ingredients has become more widespread. One of the biggest local advocates for this is Tim Peterson, owner of Go Pet Go in Mission. He opened his first store in Kansas City in 2007.

"Initially I set out with a traditional pet store. I sold fish, exotics, birds and everything else under the sun," Peterson said.

He soon realized that there was a rapidly growing demand for high quality dog and cat food, especially after the major melamine pet food recall that killed many pets that same year.

"I looked closely at the pet food industry, read the recent news and most importantly listened to my customers," he said. "I stopped carrying the major brands that were involved in the recall and brought in the brands that were not. As it turned out, these lesser-known brands were small, family-owned companies that produced higher quality pet food. Those first few months of business put us on the path of who we are today."

Peterson wasn't barking up the wrong tree; his approach worked.

"We are a specialty pet food store that offers some of the highest rated pet foods in the world," he said. "We have not had a single dry food recall in over fifteen years.

None of our current brands have ever had a kibble recalled. No pet store in Kansas City can make this claim."

Go Pet Go offers self-service bathing tubs and stations seven days a week. Admission price includes the works: towels, shampoo, dryers, brushes and even cologne. They also offer nail trims.

A local family pet store like Go Pet Go can attract a loyal clientele.

"We have a lot of regular customers that love to bring their dogs to the store," Peterson said. "Some come for the pet

bathing, but many just take a walk from their neighborhood home and let their dog pick out a treat. The locals have let us know how much they appreciate us just being here. It is heartwarming. From the start, we knew we found a great place to do business."

Peterson believes he sees the best of people when it comes to the pet owners (parents) who come into his stores.

"People love their pets immensely," he said. "Our customers have gone the extra yard, past the big box stores, to find the best food and products for their dogs and



Go Pets Go storefront at 6200 Johnson Drive.

Go Pet Go specializes in high quality pet foods and other treats.



cats. A dog or cat is part of the family."

Peterson said both residents and neighboring business owners support Go Pet Go.

"We truly enjoy the downtown Mission shopping district," Peterson said. "The local people are very friendly and receptive. Other business owners in the area shop our store and get to know us." The work environment here is positive. Many of our employees even request to work at the Mission location.

Peterson's excitement over the new innovations in pet food extends to the new ways people approach pet ownership.

"When it comes to pet ownership there seems to be an upward trend in adoptions from rescue organizations, especially with dogs," Peterson said. "People are not so caught up on specific breeds and pedigrees as they once were. Mutts are popular. People enjoy guessing at lineage of a unique mix. Most importantly, rescuing an unwanted shelter dog or a stray is rewarding."

Peterson currently has four locations: Mission, Kansas City, Parkville and Liberty. Originally all the stores were named Go Pet Go; now Mission is the only store that still uses the original name. The others are named Pettersson Pet.

"With the name Go Pet Go many people thought we were a national franchise," Peterson said. "A few years ago, I decided to put my family's name on the business. Although my surname is spelled 'Peterson' I chose the original spelling 'Pettersson' as a way to honor my late grandfather, a



Owners can use self-service wash and grooming stations inside the store.

Swedish immigrant who arrived in central Kansas in 1929 and struggled as a farmer during the Great Depression."

The family nature of the business continues to this day. Go Pet Go and Pettersson Pet stores are all locally owned and operated.

"My wife, Megan, joined me in 2013 first as an employee and in 2021 we married," Peterson said. "Megan has been a godsend. She has a degree in animal science and is an expert in pet nutrition. We are partners in every sense of the word. Megan's strength is working closely with our customers and helping them find

the right food for their pet. We also have two sons that have played a major role in our business, Dal no longer works for the business, but he spent most of his teenage years in the stores. Younger brother, Carver, will turn eighteen next week, and still can be found assisting customers on the weekends."

A new addition to their business is also their new e-commerce site "Paw and Oats," at PawandOats.com and for more information visit their website at petterssonpet.com.

Go Pet Go is located at 6200 Johnson Dr. in Mission, Kansas.

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Heaven Comes to Earth...and He's Angry

Local Mission Resident **John R. Dougherty**
Becomes a New Author



Fueled by Christian beliefs—relevant biblical verses and Christian doctrine abound—this tale about the spiritual awakenings of all three characters is powerfully moving. (Christian readers will also undoubtedly enjoy the pop-culture references, like the Christian metal band Stryper.) The pacing is brisk, and Dougherty's narrative reads like a thriller, high intensity throughout with action-packed scenes from beginning to end

- from Kirkus Reviews



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Therapy dog builds community at Rushton Elementary School

Story by Kris Baker

A respected member of Rushton's Elementary School's staff walks down the school hall. The students light up when they see him. Even though he has been there less than a year, everyone knows his name. Moose has made quite an impact on the school, and you can tell how happy he is to be there from his wagging tail.

Moose the Doodle (a poodle mix breed) is a proud graduate of Warrior's Best Friend School House Project, an organization that trains therapy dogs to work in schools. He comes to school every day, greeting all the students as they get off the bus in the morning and seeing them off at the end of each day. In between, Moose visits classrooms and spends time with students both in groups and one on one.

Pursuing a therapy dog for Rushton was originally the idea of school social worker Cathy Lorino. She received a flyer from Warrior's Best Friend and filled it out, thinking it would be a longshot Rushton would be selected because of significant growing interest in school-based facility therapy dogs. She didn't hear anything for months, and then, her phone rang.

"When I got the call in Summer 2022, I immediately called our principal Kristy Fornal and shared the opportunity with her," Lorino said. "We were both very excited but needed to find matching



Moose The Doodle

Rushton Elementary School

Facility Therapy Dog

Insta: @MooseTheDoodle1

twitter: @MooseTheDoodle1



NOT JUST TEACHER'S PET

funds in order to adopt Moose."

They found a willing partner in Christ Church Mission, who earmarks many of their donations to help local schools.

"I expected them to say they could give us some of the funds," Lorino said. "I was shocked and thrilled then when they gave us funds for the whole thing."

Lorino began researching the benefits of a therapy dog in earnest and was even more excited about the opportunity. She discovered the benefits a therapy dog could bring include:

- Relieve student stress
- Help improve reading skills
- Increase academic scores
- Increase attendance
- Create a calm environment where students feel safe, accepted and loved
- Create positive interactions in classrooms
- Comfort to those facing anxiety and emotional distress
- Trauma-sensitive interactions
- Grief support
- Socialization and language development for students with autism or intellectual disabilities
- Culture-building impact
- Joy and happiness

Lorino and Fornal introduced the idea of the therapy dog in August 2022. They surveyed Rushton staff and the PTA, and both were in favor of adding Moose to the Rushton community.

After a few more months of intensive training, Moose was ready for school.

"Moose joined our staff in February 2023," Lorino said. "It has truly been a wonderful experience for the students and staff at Rushton." According to Lorino, Moose has become a star around school. He even has his own Instagram account (@Moosethedoodle1). Many of the students go out of their way to see Moose during the day, even if it's just to give him a quick pat on the head.

"He gets maybe 300 pets a day," Lorino said. "He loves the kids and all the attention, so much that I joke that when we leave school Moose needs a therapy human."

Moose also passed the American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen test, which is an indicator of how well he can do interacting in a community and around people.

"I'm very proud of him," Lorino said.

Away from school, Moose lives with Lorino and has become a part of her family. However, he knows where he is needed and is excited to go to school every morning.

"What impresses me the most is how intuitive he is," Lorino said. "He knows which kids are having a bad day or just in need of some extra support, and he goes right to the people who need him the most."

Lorino believes having Moose at Rushton has been a wonderful experience and

would recommend a therapy dog to other schools investigating similar programs.

"The District has seen an increase in the number of trained facility therapy dogs and has developed guidelines for how therapy dogs can be introduced in the Shawnee Mission Schools," Lorino said. "I think it's great because it creates a pathway for schools to add a great resource to their staff."

For those interested in more information about therapy dogs in schools, visit warriorsbestfriends.org or edweek.org.



Moose enjoys all kinds of activities at Rushton!

A low-angle, action shot of football players in purple and white uniforms during a game. The players are in a three-point stance on a grass field under a cloudy sky. One player in a white jersey is reaching for the football.

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Be Prepared When Seconds Matter

When Johnson County MED-ACT responds to your home to help with a sudden illness or injury, residents may not always be able to communicate their medical history, including a list of medications and any life-threatening allergies.

To assist with this common scenario, Johnson County MED-ACT has created the File of Life program, which is available to citizens at no charge. The tool allows patients to post a "mini medical history" via a magnet on their refrigerator at no charge so paramedics have a place to look for this critical information.

A form can be downloaded on the MED-ACT website at jocogov.org/departments/med-act/file-life-program. Residents may also call 913.715.1950 to receive a magnetic sleeve with a File of Life information that can be displayed on their refrigerators so paramedics can access it in case of emergency.

The form includes spaces for patients to include demographic information and patient preferences including the hospital of choice and whether or not an "Out of Hospital Do Not Resuscitate" form exists for the patient. The form is folded and placed in the magnet pocket for display on the refrigerator.

When seconds count in an emergency situation, this form can be an effective way to communicate critical information about medical history or current medical status to paramedics so that they can get the information they need.

Find additional community resources for older adults who age 60 and up at jocogov.org/departments/aging-and-human-services/information-and-community-resources.



Would you like to plant a tree in a park or other public space?

Is there a special person or event you would like to honor with a celebration tree? Please contact Penn Almoney Parks + Recreation Director at 913.722.8210 or palmoney@missionks.org to learn more about Mission's Celebration Tree Program.

Mission Launches Grant Program to Help Residents Improve Energy Efficiency



Are you losing energy in your home? Spending more on utility bills than you have to? As we tackle climate change and try to reach the regional goal of Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050, reducing this energy waste in our homes and other buildings is a key opportunity.

The Mission City Council initiated a new grant program to fund 15 energy audits of residential homes this summer, and the results are in! The participants shared that they were surprised by some of the results but that they could really see where they could make small changes for a big impact. "You figure you could change things here or there, but to actually see the energy loss quantified, it's really eye-opening" Ellen Parker, one of the program participants said of the audit.

A typical audit costs around \$350 and results in a detailed report specific to your home. The audits were performed by two licensed contractors: Central Energy Audits "centralenergyaudits.com" and Green CAT Services "greencatservices.com"

Common recommendations for improvements include:

- Sealing all duct work
- Foam insulating top plates of wall cavity returns
- Blowing more insulation, especially in the attic
- Air sealing light fixtures and
- Spray foaming the rim joists



The City will be sharing the results of the audits soon, and will be working with program participants to help with some improvements as funds allow, on a sliding scale based on income. Keep an eye on our social media and website for ways you can learn more, or make similar improvements in your home!



The Bicycle and Pedestrian Connection Study is a Planning for Sustainable Places (PSP) project using grant funds awarded by the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC). The study focuses on planning a city-wide bicycle, pedestrian, and trail network that will allow residents to use active transportation to move around Mission to key destinations and connect into the Greater Kansas City Metro Area Trails. The City has partnered with RDG Planning & Design, BHC, and Venice Communications to lead the process.

Community members' input is important to creating a user-friendly active transportation network. Throughout the planning process there will be multiple ways to learn more about

the project and provide feedback. Check the City's webpage to find latest way to engage.



Mission Business District Updates

It's been a great late summer and early fall in the Mission Business District. We have had the pleasure of attending six NEJC Chamber ribbon cuttings in the last couple of months for both new businesses and to celebrate expansions of current businesses in Mission.

We can't wait to see what's to come in the next few months! Thanks for choosing Mission as your business home and letting us celebrate you!

Advocates for Seniors, LC — KC Maker Studio and Fabrics — Victor's Upholstery — @Prime Care — Lil' Dudes — Ovation Dance Academy



Fall Yard Waste Tips

As the leaves begin to fall you may be wondering what to do with your yard waste. Mission residents have several options for Fall yard clean up, such as mulching the leaves, composting the leaves, or disposing of them through the weekly trash pickup.

If you decide to bag your leaves, please ensure the yard waste is in biodegradable paper bags or in containers clearly marked "Yard Waste." Plastic bags will not be

accepted for yard waste and set outs should not weigh more than 40 pounds. Each household is allowed 10 bags or bundles of yard waste set outs per week.

If you choose to compost your leaves, make sure to regularly turn the compost pile to prevent it from becoming a nuisance to neighboring properties. While leaves blowing from one property to another is not a violation of City Code, please consider doing your part to keep our neighborhoods looking clean and tidy this Fall!





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POOL PARTY FOR POOCHES IN THE BOOKS

Mission's outdoor Aquatic Facility hosted another successful "Pool Party for Pooches" on September 5. This popular event continues to draw Mission residents and their furry friends to the pool for one last splash of the season! Mark your calendars for 2024!

Make Your Vote Count

Remember, your vote is your voice, and you should exercise it every chance you get!



Simple Ways to Give Back

Are you looking for a simple and meaningful way to give back this holiday season? Mission's Family Adoption program is always in need of gift bags, \$15-\$20 gift cards (Hy-Vee, Walmart, QT, Target) and small gift boxes. This year canned vegetables or soups are also in high demand. Donations may be dropped off at the Powell Community Center.





Linda Brown (center) and her staff show off their colorful colors at their Mission Mart shop.

Dubdog Designs proves hit with Chiefs, Royals and all dog lovers

By Kris Baker • Photos by Kathy DeLorenzo

Patrick Mahome's dogs Steel and Silver wear them. So do dogs adopted through KC Pet Project, thanks to Royals pitcher Josh Staumont's partnership with the organization.

For fun designer doggy wear that the pros support, Dubdog Designs fits the bill. Linda Brown's Mission business specializes in custom bandanas, collars and leashes that can come in a variety of styles, including offerings representing your local sports team, favorite flower or special holiday. In addition to collars and leashes, their range of products now includes bowties, felt daisies and felt roses.

Dog wear wasn't on Linda Brown's mind when she took her love of art and started working in advertising. It was at that job in 2009 when her love of art got a chance to combine with her love of animals. As a birthday gift for a friend, she used her sewing skill to create a custom collar and leash for the friend's dog. The gift proved so popular around the office she started getting more requests for custom canine couture. There was a whole litter of designs people wanted for their dog's collars, and Brown was happy to oblige.

In 2010, Brown took her fledgling operation to the Kansas City Pet Expo. She called the new business Waggiwear and her booth proved extremely popular.

She sold out of everything she brought. She started taking more orders and in 2016 she left her advertising job to focus on the business fulltime, and the next year changed the name to Dubdog Designs.

Calling her products fetchingly fun dog wear, Brown opened a small retail space in 2019. In less than a year there the word stopped.

COVID-19 was difficult for many businesses. However, there was side effect of the pandemic that surprised Brown.

"Because everyone was staying home, they were walking their dogs more," Brown said. "It was the only time a lot of people left their house. And because they were walking their dogs more, they began to pay more attention to the collars and leashes they were using. And they wanted some unique designs to show off their personality."

Brown focused her efforts on online sales and the business blossomed. After the pandemic ended, bolstered by her strong online sales, was able to open her store on Johnson Drive. She now has Dubdog Designs products in 250 stores nationwide. Dubdog Designs is now creating 100 collars a day. Brown and her small team of three employees still make all of the products.

One of her customers turned out to be

one of the best patrons a Kansas City area company could ask for.

"I have a friend who would dog sit for Patrick Mahomes," Brown said. "While watching his two dogs she brought them Dubdog Designs products. It was about four years ago. I got to see the dogs, Silver and Steel, on social wearing my collars. That was very cool."

Brown also said some other Chiefs players followed their quarterback's lead and purchased some of her collars. As expected, she says the Chiefs' and Royals'-branded designs are always popular.

Brown has another connection to a local sports figure. She has worked with Royals pitcher Josh Staumont's efforts with the KC Pet Project. She agreed to supply collars and leashes to all the dogs adopted through the project.

"When I was young, I wanted to be a veterinarian, but my interests in design and art steered me away from that path," Brown said. "Now I get to combine that love with my lifelong love of animals. It has been the perfect tying of those two worlds."

Looking good can be as important as feeling good, and this is true of our puppy pals as well. For more information on Dubdog Designs go to dubdog.pet or visit their store at 5429 Johnson Dr., Mission, KS 66205.

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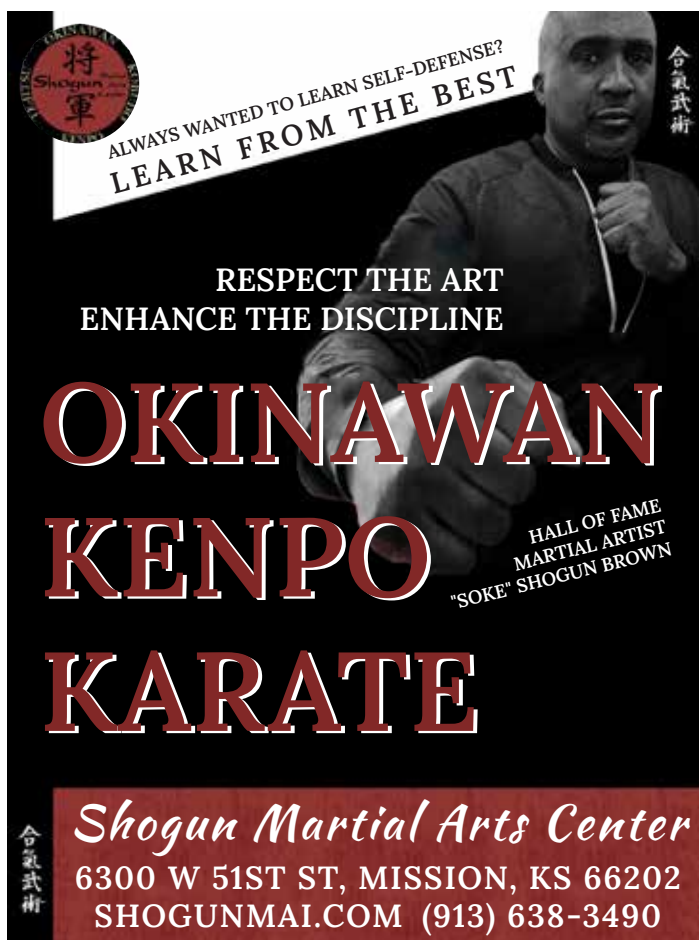
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A Worthwhile Project

Two local animal clinics benefit from The Mission Project

Story by Kris Baker

Every morning, Ryan Ketchem walks two blocks to his job at the Dearborn Animal Clinic. He enjoys his job, and it is especially important to him. Ryan, who is on the autism spectrum, has worked hard to get to this place in his life and he deserves all the credit for that. However, he and his family also acknowledge the Mission Project for helping him on his journey. The mission of The Mission Project is to

“enable capable adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live independently and safely in their community with individualized support.” Participants live in their own apartments in Mission, Kansas. Like others their age, they hold jobs, pay bills, cook meals, and socialize with their friends. They exercise, travel together and serve their community. In short, they live fully.

“I’ve lived here for a little over 4 years

now,” Ryan said. “I moved here from Minnesota in August of 2019. I’ve lived on my own in a one-bedroom apartment for the last 4 years.”

With assistance from his job coach Ryan found his job with Dearborn Animal Clinic, and it has been a great fit for an animal lover like Ryan.

“I walk and feed the dogs and feed the cats,” he said. He also weighs animals and charts their activity. He cleans kennels, does laundry, and performs other tasks as needed. “I really enjoy working with animals and I have a cat too. I’ve had my cat (Kiki) for about 6 years now. She is very important to me and is usually sitting in front of the door when I get home from work.”

The Mission Project was founded 20 years ago for the purpose of assisting young adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities live independent and productive lives. The 34 Participants in the Mission Project hold meaningful and rewarding jobs while living in their own apartments and participating in weekly art, drama, history, nutrition and exercise classes organized and sponsored by the Mission Project. They also take the lead on planning trips and outings to local and regional destinations of interest.

Stephen was an early participant in The Mission Project. It was 19 years ago when the program helped Stephen, who has Down syndrome, get a job at Mission Veterinary Emergency and Specialty Services (MVES). It was known as Mission Medvet at the time and Dr. David Allen was impressed by Stephen and offered him his position. Stephen had just moved out of his parents’ house and into his first apartment in Mission. It was an anxious time for Stephen as well as his family. They didn’t know how he would do on his own. It turns out they didn’t need to be concerned.

“The wonderful people at MVES could not have been more welcoming, supportive, patient and kind to Stephen,” said Stephen’s father. “Through the years, as Mission Medvet has grown and expanded, Stephen’s confidence



One of Ryan's jobs at the Dearborn Animal Clinic is feeding the cats.

in himself has also grown. Stephen is proud to be a part of the very special organization Dr. Allen and his staff have created. It is obvious that MVES has become a very important part of Stephen's life and that he truly loves and values his job and the friends he has made there."

Hospital Administrator Stacy Deemer started shortly after Stephen, and in their time working together she said Stephen has proven to be a huge asset to the company.

"He is a joy to work with, always smiling, always engaged," Deemer said. "He gives everyone celebrity nicknames. I have found that he has taught us a lot more than we could ever teach him. He has taught everyone here about

unconditional love, happiness, and peace."

Queen Latifah, as Stephen has dubbed Deemer, also believes in the importance of program like The Mission Project. She recently put together a national presentation on hiring nontraditional employees.

"Everyone should be able to show what they can do," Deemer said. "He is just as capable as any of us."

MVES just celebrated their 30-year anniversary.

"Over those 30 years, MVES has provided expert and compassionate care to the pets of so many in the Mission community," Stephen's father said. "It was a special moment for us to know that Stephen has contributed his part to



Stephen's work ethic over the last 19 years make him invaluable to the MVES team.

What they teach us

- To Be Proud of Where You Work
- Smile Everyday
- Love Everyone
- Lose Your Inhibitions
- See The Good in Everyone
- Dance If You Want To

What do we teach our non-traditional team members?

- Laundry
- Trash
- Recycle
- Stocking
- Vacuuming
- Sweeping/Mopping

those services." Stephen's father notes that when they mention where their son works, most people are familiar with its services, and many want to share a story about the extraordinary care and treatment their beloved pet received there.

Mission is fortunate to have facilities like MVES and Dearborn Animal Clinic, and those institutions are fortunate to have workers like Stephen and Ryan. Working in concert with The Mission Project has been beneficial to both pet care facilities.

"It's important for anyone who has a cat or dog and needs medical care or checkups for them occasionally. It's a good place to bring your pets," Ryan said about the Dearborn Animal Clinic. And about The Mission Project he said, "It's important for the people with disabilities so they can have friends and have things to do and somewhere to hang out."

For more information on The Mission Project visit their website at themissionproject.org. Mission Veterinary Emergency and Specialty Services is located at 5914 Johnson Dr., Mission, Kansas, and Dearborn Animal Clinic is located at 6100 Johnson Dr., Mission, Kansas.

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Mission Pet Mart, 1994. Signs in the windows of the original 1973 store point to the new location, 2 blocks east. Photo: Joyce Owens.



Newspaper clipping from Ribbon Cutting Day, 1994. "Jana Owens cut the ribbon for the new location of the Mission Pet Mart as her parents, Chad and Joyce, watch with Mayor Sylvester Powell and members of the Mission Area Chamber of Commerce." Photo: Johnson County Sun, Hattie Barham.

Mission Pet Mart

50 Years in the Pet and People Business

Story by Kate Deacon

Joyce Owens knows a thing or two about pets...and their people. As the co-owner of Mission Pet Mart reflected on 50 years in business, "We recognize we're in the pet business, but we often say we're as much in the people business."

Serving the Mission community since 1973, Mission Pet Mart has survived several location changes, adapted to changing trends, navigated the ups and downs of a small business, and through it all built a business they consider a family.

When a pet shop at Woodson and Johnson Drive came up for sale in 1973, Chad and Joyce Owens pulled together all they had to make it their own. "The shop needed a lot of work, so we called in every

favor we could to clean it up, reset it, and get it ready." Joyce had an office job and a new baby at home, and Chad shouldered most of the store's operations. "One thing people liked right off the bat was that we were open when they needed us," Joyce recalled, as she remembered coming into the store after her workday ended and staying until 9 p.m., 7 days a week. The Owens' long hours and hard work paid off as the business took root in Mission and continued to grow.

Outgrowing their first location in 1994 meant a move into the old Mission Bakery spot at Reeds and Johnson – complete with delivery chutes labeled for sugar and flour when they moved in! In 2006, the Rock Creek redevelopment plan resulted

in the move to their current location at Martway and Broadmoor.

The Mission Pet Mart has long been a favorite for kids growing up in Mission, but when the store was located on the way to the pool and the Dickinson Theater, a stop at the pet shop was a must. "I was one of those kids who would come in all the time and just follow you around," store manager Bryson Banks recalls of his early years with Chad and Joyce.

Bryson turned his interest into a career with Mission Pet Mart, starting out with part-time shifts in 2009, and he thinks of it as a family more than anything else. "This place truly is how a mom and pop business should be. I literally call her mom, and I call him dad. And I'm not the only one!"



Mission Mart's second location in downtown Mission.

"I was one of those kids who would come in all the time and just follow you around," store manager Bryson Banks recalls of his early years with Chad and Joyce.

The loyal customers and tight-knit staff are the key to success, Bryson remarks. "We have a unique relationship that makes Mission Pet Mart special, and the shop would certainly not be what it is without all of us."

While there have been countless changes over the last 50 years, Joyce notes the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic as the most significant, while Bryson's perspective is a little more personal. Looking back, Bryson points to Chad's changing role in the store as even more impactful than the pandemic. When the time came for Chad to take a step back due to health concerns in 2017, Bryson recalls "He took me aside and said... 'Time for you to step up, we'll see if you've learned anything!' Turns out, he had. Joyce beams, "He does a fantastic job!"

"Since about 2013, Chad spent most of his time showing myself and Garret Bowman how to run the shop and dropping little nuggets of gold,"

Bryson remembers. With the addition of manager Alex Ruiz and Bryson's promotion in 2017, Chad was able to pass the torch. Chad's vast knowledge of the industry continues to inspire Bryson and the staff. From researching the latest pet trends to solving aquarium plumbing problems, Bryson notes, "It's never the same thing day in and day out. There's always something to brush up on or a something new to learn."

Trends have changed over time, and online shopping has threatened small businesses, but Joyce notes, "Online can't answer the questions the way that face-to-face can answer. You don't ever make the money back for the time you spend

teaching customers about one thing or another, but that's what we're all about."

According to Joyce, their longevity in the business is something that sets them apart and allows them to answer just about any question. "The best part of this job for me is taking care of the customers so they can properly care for their pets," Joyce explains.

Bryson gets emotional reflecting on what the store and the Owens family have meant to him, as he notes that homegrown places like Mission Pet Mart are few and far between. "It's one of the few left out there, and the family and trust you find here is what a mom and pop place is really all about."



A Mission Pet Mart employee working with a variety of animals in the shop.






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- Repair or replace engines, transmissions & differentials
- Perform all factory maintenance
- Unlock your cars radio
- Electrical

- Tune-ups
- Work with extended warranty companies
- Reprogram ignition keys & remote fobs
- Repair or replace windshields
- Computer Diagnostics

ASE Certified • NAPA Car Care Center