

Two paws up: St. John, Westminster couple own South Baltimore dog daycare

By Elizabeth Lowe

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Entrepreneurs Jeanne and Bill Link first learned about dog daycare in 2008 from their son, Robert. The idea was completely foreign to them.

"I thought it was a very funny concept," she said. "Someone is going to pay to put their dog in daycare?"

After watching YouTube videos about dog daycare, the Links, who own land in Locust Point, decided to open a business for four-legged, tail-wagging customers.

They gutted the warehouse on their property, transformed it into a dog daycare, and in 2009 opened SoBo Dog Daycare and Spa. Its services include overnight stays and grooming.

"It's not humane to leave a dog crated in the house all day," Jeanne Link said. "This way they get to play and they (the dogs) seek out their friends."

To view a slideshow, navigate the arrows below. The building was designed specifically for the clients, said Jeanne Link, who noted the facility's cleanliness is a priority.

Dogs run on rubber matted floors, drink filtered water and play in an outdoor space. Owners can watch their dogs via web cameras.

"We understand you have to fill the people's need of what they want and exceed their expectations," Bill Link said.

Krystl Dontell, SoBo's general manager, described the Links as "family oriented."

"They're definitely great people to work for," Dontell said. "They make you feel like family."

Family is a priority for the Links, who worship at St. John in Westminster and have five adult sons, ages 29 to 46, seven grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

"I look at people with dogs and I understand where they're coming from, that they (dogs) are part of the family," said Jeanne Link, who grew up on a farm in Hampstead. "It's great to see how much people love their animals and how well they treat them."

Faith is paramount to the Links.

"It's always been that way for me, it's always been that way for my husband, too," said Jeanne Link, who added with a chuckle that "I think I've run every fundraiser at St. John."

She is chairwoman of the Maryland Catholic Women's Conference, scheduled for Oct. 11-12 at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg. About 300 women are expected to attend the third conference.

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