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Canine to Five doggy day care moves to larger Ferndale location

By Natalie Broda



A bright orange sign welcomes dog owners to the newly renovated Canine to Five Ferndale at 1221 E. Nine Mile Road.

Midtown-based **Canine to Five** will open a new 22,000-square-foot doggy day care next week, effectively tripling the size of the Ferndale location, said owner and founder Liz Blondy.

The new location, at 1221 E. Nine Mile Road, will open May 18 and offer day care and boarding services.

Blondy said the move is a result of the overwhelmingly positive feedback she has received from the Ferndale community. Previously she was renting a 6,000-square-foot building at 2141 Hilton Road. But after two years of doing business there, Blondy said, she decided it was time to find a bigger space in Ferndale.

"Nobody wants a doggy day care as neighbor; they're worried about the noise at night, and so Ferndale had very limited options," Blondy said. "I was looking for 12,000 to 15,000 square feet, but I ended up with way more space than I needed.

"It was about double what I wanted to spend, but this is too great of a building to pass up."

To supplement, Blondy said, she is leasing out 7,000 square feet of a separate room to another tenant whose business won't interfere with the dogs or vice versa.

The building cost about \$700,000, said Blondy, who estimates renovation costs at \$300,000.

One of the challenges she said she faced during this move was budgeting for renovations. Originally, Blondy had set aside \$90,000. But costs such as \$42,000 for 5- and 8-foot-high fences and \$19,000 to repave the outdoor space quickly began to add up.

"Financing the renovation has been a challenge, but I like a challenge," Blondy said. "This has definitely been an experience for me."

The Ferndale location at first will be able to board about 60 dogs at a time, depending on their size. The Detroit facility, at 3443 Cass Ave., can hold about 45 dogs and earned \$960,000 in revenue during 2014. The Ferndale location earned \$540,000.

"My employees have a break room for the first time ever," Blondy said. "And in 10 years, I've never had an office, and now we each have an office, with a door. And we have a really big, spacious lobby."

Besides boarding kennels and a kitchen, the facility includes an expanded small-dog area, the Goldy Jones Memorial Seniors Lounge, an outdoor play area, a private play area and four indoor play areas.

The four play areas, at the heart of the facility, each will serve a different purpose. The Toy Story play area will be for small dogs, The Breakfast Club area will be for adolescent dogs, The Thunderdome will be the main play area, and the Animal House play area could be used for private play or for dogs that play better in small groups.

The Goldy Jones Memorial Seniors Lounge, dedicated to a senior dog who used to board with Canine to Five regularly, is just behind the main lobby desk. Five senior dogs will be admitted at a time. Blondy said that area is both the warmest and coolest room in the facility, allowing the senior dogs to remain at a comfortable temperature.

Blondy compared the necessity of the dog senior's lounge to a senior's needs in real life.

"Imagine doggy day care as a hotel where it's all about action, like going to Vegas," Blondy said. "Your grandma doesn't want to go to Vegas; she wants to go to Fort Lauderdale. And so we introduced the senior lounge so we can totally accommodate those dogs."

The private play area will be used for dogs that are not spayed or neutered or dogs that play better alone or in small groups. The outdoor play area will include play equipment and small pools.

"I feel like my business really needs to be about customer service," Blondy said. "I really like being able to say 'yes,' and this building is going to allow me to say 'yes' more often than I ever have in the last 10 years."

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