

Hotel for Pets is No Fleabag Suites, Condos and Townhouses

By Terry Flynn

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Joe and Tracy Mason took a big gamble when they put all their financial marbles into a dog and cat boarding and grooming facility that caters primarily to travelers.

The gamble has apparently paid off, because PETSuites is doing high-volume business and the Masons are now looking at a national franchise operation.

“We’ve really been pleased with the way the business has taken off,” Mr. Mason, of Mount Lookout, said Friday. “We expected to lose money in the beginning, but we’re already showing a profit.”

The Masons offer amenities not found at most animal boarding businesses, such as Frisbee tossing, walks around the 2.5-acre grounds, and tongue-in-cheek French lessons to “prepare your pooch for his next Parisian trip.”

The 12,000-square-foot facility on Holly Road off Donaldson Road near the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport cost \$1.5 million. It includes 108 dog “suites,” six dog “townhouses,” and 20 four-level cat condos.

The suites are two-section kennels in three sizes to accommodate different size dogs, while the townhouses are rooms with a bed and a television. The cat condos feature such feline attractions as aquariums with tropical fish, and windows that look out to bird feeders and the woods beyond.

“We think it’s wonderful,” said Marjorie Davis of Verona. “I have two German shepherds, and when my husband and I go out of town the dogs stay at PETSuites. They also have a doggy daycare, and when I’m working long hours I take the dog there in the morning and pick them up at night.”

Ms. Davis knows there are other dog boarding facilities in Greater Cincinnati, “But none are as close to us as this one, and none of them are open from 6:30 (a.m.) until 9 at night. That really makes a difference.”

Mrs. Mason, who was a business strategist and project manager for a Cincinnati company before joining her husband in the pet boarding business, said they see dogs and cats from all over the area. She pointed to a little white poodle in a townhouse; it’s former Ohio State Sen. Stan Aronoff’s pet.

A small suite for one dog is \$16.50 a day which includes food, water and attention by the staff. A townhouse for one dog is \$29 a day. A condo for one cat is \$11.50 a day.

Mr. Mason said the business has grown steadily since PETSuites opened just before Thanksgiving last year, “On Christmas Day, we had 147 dogs and 32 cats staying with us,” he said.

The grooming business has not taken off with the same strength as the boarding side, but the Masons hope to remedy that in the near future with more advertising and marketing.

There is a complete grooming facility with separate rooms for washing, drying, and clipping. They even have a new name for the grooming side—PETSpa.

Next? Mr. Mason is looking at property on the Cincinnati side of the river, as well as Columbus, Indianapolis and Louisville.

“One day we’d like to see PETSuites all over the U.S.,” he said.