



Providing Peace Of Mind For You And Your Pets

By Jim Brumm

According to the Humane Society of the United States, Americans own over 74 million dogs and over 88 million cats. Obviously pets are as much a part of American life as hot dogs and apple pie. Billions are spent each year on pet food, medical expenses and toys. Gone are the days when the dogs lived outside under the porch and cats lived in the barn and supported themselves by hunting mice. Today, Americans pamper their pets and treat them as one of the family.

Marguerite McLennan, owner of Wine Country Pet Sitters, is one of those happy pet owners. She is the owner (though sometimes who owns who is a tossup) of a Papillon dog, Buddy, and two cats, Joey and Socks. From a young age, Marguerite was an animal lover. "I had pets all my life," she said. "I knew everybody that had pets on the way to school. I still do!"

The widow of a Santa Rosa police officer and a 35-year resident of Sonoma County, Marguerite spoke with me at her home in Windsor where she manages her business. A cat scratching/climbing post stood in one corner; several dog toys were in evidence on the floor. Buddy, ever protective and friendly, sat on her lap as she described her company's genesis.

"In two thousand seven I went on a cruise," she said. "I



Marguerite McLennan, owner of Wine Country Pet Sitters, with her dog, Buddy

needed to find someone to take care of my pets." Stroking Buddy's head she looked up and said, "I refuse to put them in a kennel." Marguerite searched far and wide before finding a friend of a friend who agreed to not only watch her pets, but stay in her home with them while she was away.

"During my cruise I was thinking about my pets and wondering how they were doing," she said, "and it occurred to me: There is a real need for this service. There are so many pet owners that have to deal with finding someone they can trust to watch their pets every time they leave home. I love animals; it seemed a perfect fit for me." Buddy rolled over in her lap so she could scratch his stomach.

"The whole idea of pet ownership has changed," she said. "As a kid, my dog was an outside dog. Today, my dog sleeps on the bed. And I'm not alone. I can't tell you how many people I know that say they can't leave home because of their pets. I'm providing the solution."

Wine Country Pet Sitters provides several services. If you just need someone to visit your pet during the day while you're at work, they'll do that and take your dog for an afternoon walk. If you would like your pet to get a little more attention each day while you're away, Wine Country

Pet Sitters will provide daily visits that include individual attention, feeding and play time. And, if you choose, one of Marguerite's trained sitters will come stay at your home with your pet for the duration of your time away, walking your dog or playing with your cat, watering plants and bringing in the mail, going for walks and in general making sure your furry family member is loved, fed, cared for, and, most importantly, not alone. "Having someone stay at your house is good for more than just your pet," said Marguerite. "Someone is there, lights are turned on and off; it keeps your home from looking empty to outsiders."

Marguerite is very careful about the sitters she hires. Her vetting process includes a full background

"I'm a pet person—I know how important it is to know that my pets are cared for."

Marguerite McLennan

check and calling personal references. But mostly it's about her impression of the potential sitter. "I look for someone who loves pets, obviously, has experience caring for them and that has done pet sitting before," said Marguerite. "My first impression is very important and I have passed over some applicants because it just didn't feel right. Also, we're bonded and insured." With seven sitters contracted to date, Wine Country Pet Sitters offers service to all of Sonoma County."

Before a sitter is matched to a pet, Marguerite and the potential sitter meet with the client and their pet to make sure there's a good connection among everyone involved. A client/pet profile is taken, noting daily routines and habits, special food requirements, sleep arrangements (for the pet and the sitter), personality traits and anything else germane to the well-being of the pet and the peace of mind



Joey

of the client. "Sometimes the pet and the sitter don't click," said Marguerite. "In that case we provide a different sitter until everyone, including the pet, is comfortable. My goal," she added, "is to provide the very best pet care possible. We leave the home in perfect condition, we play and cuddle with the pets and make sure they are fed and feel safe. We'll bring in the mail, water the plants, whatever's needed."

In addition, Marguerite or her sitter will provide a written diary of each



Socks

visit, describing what was done, how the pet was eating, what activities they engaged in and more, so the pet owners can be assured that all went well. And, Wine Country Pet Sitters will continue to visit and care for their

charge until the owner calls and tells them they're home. This ensures the pet is taken care of in the event the owner's return is delayed for some reason.

As any pet owner knows, it's not only important that their pets are well taken care of, it's important that they *know* they're being taken care of. To that end, if requested, Wine Country Pet Sitters will send their clients an email account of each visit, telling what transpired and how the pet is doing, so the owners can relax knowing that all is well with their pet.

Marguerite smiles and her eyes flash when she speaks of her service. Her obvious passion for the subject spills through with every word. "I *love* getting to know people and their pets," she said. "I'm providing a service that is needed so much by so many. This is something near and dear to my heart.

I'm a pet person—I know how important it is to know that my pets are cared for. To be able to provide that kind of peace of mind to my clients makes me feel good. Our clients love us as much as we love them. It's such a positive thing to walk through the door and have the clients so happy and relieved to see us. This is a very positive business. I love it." Laughing, she ruffled Buddy's ears and added, "I'm a bore because all I talk about is my animals!"

Wine Country Pet Sitters is a member of the Better Business Bureau, Pet Sitters International and the National Association of Pet Sitters, and Marguerite actively supports the local library and Humane Society.

If you need to leave town and want to make sure your four-legged family member is well taken care of, give Marguerite a call at Wine Country Pet Sitters. She guarantees your pet will be loved, pampered and cared for—happy and ready to greet you when you get home.

Wine Country Pet Sitters can be reached at 707-836-0238 or at www.winecountrypetsitters.com