

Taria Avery finds local success with Pet Styling Salon

Written by Ayana Jones Tribune Staff Writer
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Taria Avery's business is experiencing significant growth at a time when the overall economy is sagging, to say the least.

When she launched Avery's Pet Salon and Boutique back in 2008, Avery set out to build a top-notch, viable pet grooming operation that would contribute to the local economy.

"We wanted have a long-term viable company — something that is here to stay," said Avery, a 33-year old native of Illinois.

Now Avery's goal is coming full circle as she seeks to hire two new groomers, due to an upsurge in business.

Instead of having her clients visit a brick and mortar location, Avery drives her hybrid, climate-controlled van up to their front doors.

Her van serves as a mobile pet salon where her furry clients can receive an array of personalized services ranging from hair cuts, baths and spa therapy such as hot facial treatments, comfort baths to treat irritated skin, aromatherapy body massages and paw bubble baths.

"Our sessions are very comprehensive," says Avery, who affectionately refers to pets as the "kids."

"They're generally more than a bath or a haircut. They include a health assessment — just to make sure that the pet is in optimal health."

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Despite the state of the economy, Avery has seen an upsurge in the number of clients seeking to have their pets groomed and pampered.

“One client at a time — that’s how we build it. Slow and steady wins the race,” she smiled.

“Everyday I get up and I look in the mirror and I don’t care if it’s 100 degrees or zero, it’s another day to make it happen.”

Avery attributes the growth of her business to a combination of grassroots effort and making key connections with pet professionals. This led Avery’s to receive referrals from veterinarians, physical therapists and trainers.

As someone who is not a Philadelphia native, Avery appreciates the support that she’s gotten from local residents.

“Philadelphia is a great town. They’ve welcomed me and Avery’s with open arms,” she said.

“You can’t go a lot of places and not be a native, start things up and make it work.”

More than a year ago, Faye Rosenfeld saw Avery’s business card at her dog’s veterinarian’s office and decided to give her a try. Rosenfeld appreciates the personalized treatment that Avery has given to her two dogs, Shana and Lola. Avery routinely gives Shana and Lola haircuts and massages.

“She loves the dogs,” said Rosenfeld. “She just gives each dog individualized attention. It’s one-on-one. It’s all personalized. My dogs are very finicky but when they see her they run to her, not from her. She has a wonderful business going because of the kind of person she is. She’s a natural with the dogs.”

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After 13 years of working in corporate America in business marketing, Avery decided the time had come to become the captain of her own ship. She started off by grooming her own chocolate lab and friends' pets.

While it is not required to be a pet groomer, Avery took the necessary steps to obtain her certification by attending the Academy of Dog Grooming Arts in Arlington Heights, Ill.

"I wanted to lead by example. A lot of people have this perception of grooming as completely a commodity and you don't have to be trained. It's an unregulated industry," said Avery, who decided that she wanted her business to work with certified pet groomers.

Avery launched her business with her own capital and it wasn't until this year that she applied for additional funding.

"It's so difficult to have an unproven concept so we had to prove that we would stick and it was viable and growing," she said.

She recently received a grant from the Merchant Fund to obtain a second van. With an eye on the future of her business, Avery plans to add a third van to her fleet by next year and she's laying the groundwork to open a storefront.

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