

K-9 Resorts is more than just doggie day care

Parker brothers find hotel mentality has helped grow business

By **Meg Fry**, June 8, 2015 at 3:00 AM

Jason and Steven Parker were not allowed to have a pet while growing up in Scotch Plains — a fact of life the brothers can thank their parents for now.

That's because — while in middle school in 1999 — Jason and Steven created a lucrative solution:

A business called K-9 Guardians Professional Pet Sitting.

“We just wanted to do something where we could play with dogs,” Jason Parker said.

It was just the beginning for the young entrepreneurs.

“We traveled all over the country attending seminars and industry conferences and touring premium pet care facilities,” Parker said. “We saw what we liked and what we didn't out there in the industry.”

All in an effort to learn as much as they could before co-founding their own pet care facility, K-9 Resorts Daycare & Luxury Hotel in Fanwood, in 2005.

“When we opened up K-9 Resorts, I was actually still in high school,” said Parker, the president. “It was the second semester of my senior year and through the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School's work-study program, I was able to go to school for a couple hours in the morning and then help run our business in the afternoon.”



Jason Parker is the president and co-founder of K-9 Resorts. - (PHOTO BY AARON HOUSTON)

Neither Jason nor Steven, CEO, ever looked back. In fact, instead of attending college, both simply wanted to keep moving forward.

So in 2006, the brothers sold K-9 Guardians Professional Pet Sitting for a six-figure sum in order to expand K-9 Resorts into the multimillion-dollar, award-winning franchise company it is today.

“We are a cage-free facility, and that’s what our clients really appreciate,” Parker said.

Currently, K-9 Resorts has five locations — Fanwood, Fairfield, Middletown, Madison and East Brunswick — and is in the process of opening two more in Hamilton and Horsham, Pennsylvania. For about \$50 to \$70 a day, K-9 Resorts customers can rest assured that, while they’re away, their dogs will be well taken care of within all-inclusive luxury designer suites or traditional cage-boarding options.

“An overwhelming majority of our clients also take advantage of doggie day care so that their dog is not just sitting in their room all day, but playing, socializing and going outside more frequently,” Parker said.

“By the time the dogs go back to their accommodations to sleep at night, they’re tired and have no anxiety.”

Or they always have the option to watch the color televisions tuned to Animal Planet in each room.

“We invest a lot of money into the materials that we use to build our K-9 Resorts locations,” Parker said.

Everything is premium, from the artificial turf outside with antimicrobial agents to the flooring systems to the air purification systems.

And even though it’s a more expensive layout, each building location is carefully designed to reduce pets’ stress levels and improve noise control and ventilation.

No wonder K-9 Resorts has been rated No. 1 by New Jersey Monthly Magazine, Courier News, Suburban Essex and Monmouth Health & Life Magazine, and also has been featured on Fox News, CNN, CNBC, The Wall Street Journal and Forbes.

“We wanted to start with New Jersey, branch out into neighboring states and then continue to grow into a national brand after that to make sure we have all the time and resources to support

and dedicate to each franchise,” Parker said. “We’re extremely hands on and involved in every detail throughout every step of the way.”

While the goal is to grow to between 100 and 200 locations total, the company will at least be opening up three additional corporate stores and 12 more franchise locations over the next five years.

“The next three markets we’re going to focus on are Bergen County, the Bedminster/Bernardsville area and Cherry Hill,” Parker said.

Every month, K-9 Resorts boards more than 1,500 dogs. And each location that’s been open for more than a year has been sold out during peak times, or about 125 days a year.

In fact, K-9 Resorts in Fanwood is currently sold out until Labor Day.

“Being busy is a good problem to have,” Parker said.

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The biz in brief

Company: K-9 Resorts Daycare & Luxury Hotel

Founded: 2005

Headquarters: Fanwood

Employees: More than 100 employees company-wide, with 10 to 15 employees at each location.

One More Thing: K-9 Resorts is rebuilding its flagship location in Fanwood to open at the end of this month. “This will be the most state-of-the-art pet care facility in the country,” Jason Parker said. The 7,000-square-foot building cost \$3 million, but K-9 Resorts isn’t planning to raise its prices. “The business model Steven and I set up is all about offering the best pet care at an affordable rate,” Parker said.

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