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LOOK + FEEL

DAY CARE GOES TO THE DOGS

ALWAYS SHARE YOUR SQUEAKY HAMBURGER TOY. TOY NOT TO END UP IN THE TIME-OUT CRATE. DON'T EVER BITE THE ALPHA DOG. These are just a few tips to ensure a happy stay at dog-ma Inc., Washington, DC's first day-care center for dogs.

Please don't bark your disapproval. Time-starved professionals are struggling to juggle responsibilities. They have to deal with child care, with elder care—and with pet care. "Guilt is what drove me to open this business," says Rebecca Blagyer, 37, founder and owner of dog-ma, who gave up her position with Roesch International Inc., a financial-services company, after she concluded that the job of managing people was getting in the way of caring for her dogs. "I'd rush home after a 12-hour day, and my dogs would be nuts." Blagyer has created a customer-service model with real bite. Dog-ma opened its doors last September, and its clients now include the "best friends" of doctors, lawyers, congressional staffers, and World Bank officials. The 7,000-square-foot facility, located less than a mile from the U.S. Capitol and the Supreme Court, is open weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., offering what Blagyer calls "cageless" service: "Picture a pajama party for dogs." And not just for any dogs. Dog-ma screens all of its canine customers for temperament, suitability, health, and neutering. There's even a bathing service. No wonder Blagyer's charges are panting with satisfaction. Many of them, Blagyer says, go home exhausted after a hard day of play. "Sometimes their owners have to wake them up for dinner."

MELANIE GOLDMAN

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