

Purr-fect pals for your pets

Whiskers & Leo is a pet care company that offers an array of services for Staten Islanders and their furry companions

By KACEY SEMLER
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ALL SHORES — Loni Rudolph and Nicole Romagnolo simply adore their clients — and for their clients, the feeling is mutual and easily displayed with the wag of a tail. However, it's the girls' two-legged clients who truly appreciate their devotion.

As the founders and owners of Whiskers & Leo Pet Care, Ms. Rudolph and Ms. Romagnolo cater to Staten Islanders and their furry companions. With their concept of providing services strictly within a home, their customers are finding themselves more at ease when they are away.

"I love them," said client Sally Stilwell, of Greenridge, who entrusts her two-year-old Labradoodle named Duncan in the care of Ms. Rudolph, Ms. Romagnolo and their more than 25 sitters.

"It's so good to know that whether I'm gone for eight hours or a few days, I don't have to worry, or annoy my family and friends with asking them to watch him," said Ms. Stilwell. "Rain or shine, I don't have to think about it. I know he's cared for. And, Duncan looks forward to seeing his sitters."

Daily daycare, overnight boarding and dog-walking are just some of the many services offered by Whiskers & Leo.

Said Ms. Romagnolo, of another: "We also realize

what a great companion a dog or cat can make for senior citizens, and would like them to know we are here for them if they wish to have a pet, but maybe don't have the ability to give them long walks or take them to the vet or groomer."

Every pet-sitter employed by Whiskers & Leo has been background checked and properly trained to provide care for any animal that needs a companion, from dogs to cats to hamsters to turtles, she added.

"We have a pot belly pig as a client," said Ms. Rudolph. "Her name is Stella and we absolutely adore her. She is 130 pounds and is so smart and clean and fun to care for. She always comes when called and loves having her ears rubbed."

Though technically a new business, Ms. Rudolph, of Grasmere, and Ms. Romagnolo, of New Springville, are no strangers to the industry — they have been running a similar pet-care service since 2008; however, then it was known as Fetch! Pet Care of Staten Island and was part of a national franchise.

"We rescinded from Fetch! in August. There are a lot of reasons, but the main reason is that we thought it would be a better business opportunity for us to go out on our own," said Ms. Rudolph.

With a core foundation, the girls just needed a fresh logo — and a new name.



Nicole Romagnolo, left, of New Springville, and Loni Rudolph, second from left, of Grasmere, founders and owners of Whiskers & Leo Pet Care, with client Sally Stilwell, of Greenridge, and her dog, Duncan.

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"Whiskers is Nicole's cat's name and Leo is my cat's name," said Ms. Rudolph.

"All of our clients are very supportive of us going out on our own and opening Whiskers and Leo," she continued. "They were always aware that we were the faces, managers, and owners of Fetch! and they trusted that we would be

providing the same quality of services to them, on which we have built our reputation."

It's quite a reputation at that — one look at the reviews on the Whiskers & Leo Web site and it's not hard to believe that the girls are moving in the right direction.

"No one [on Staten Island] was offering a professional pet sitting service. We both always had a soft spot hearts for animals ... so from just talking one day and brainstorming, here we are now," said Ms. Rudolph.

For more information on Whiskers & Leo Pet Care and the services offered, visit www.whiskersandleo-petcare.com.

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Ms. Rudolph and Ms. Romagnolo take Duncan for a walk in his neighborhood.

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