

Something to Smile About

In the Land of Paws, over-the-top is oh-so-adorable.

words KELLI WHITE | photos ABBE FINDLEY

Sunshine. Friends. Babies. Puppies. More often than not, they all have the same causal result...a smile, and that's something contagious we all want more of. Land of Paws is a unique specialty pet store that is sure to bring a smile to any patron's face, dog-lover or not.

Founded in 1993 by veterinarians Dr. Mark Daly and Dr. George Gates and their wives, Patty Daly and Pam Gates, Land of Paws began with the mission to provide the Kansas City community with an upscale dog and cat store offering the most exclusive pet supplies, pet apparel and specialty items in combination with extraordinary customer service.

The first Land of Paws store, located next door to the owners' veterinary practice at 83rd and Mission in Prairie Village, Kan., proved to be an instant success with pet lovers and general shoppers alike. In 2003, Kristen Lewis and Catelin Carey expanded the business by opening its second location in southern Overland Park at 6772 West 135th Street. The two still serve as operational managers at this location. A third location has opened in Briarcliff Village, and both Lewis and Carey handle merchandising at all three stores. Carey says customers will enjoy a different experience at each location as the merchandise differs in each store.

"We're always getting in new things," Lewis says.

The puppies for sale at Land of Paws are all full-bred, pre-checked by veterinarians and absolutely adorable. They add to the overall ambiance of the store and, for many people, are the main attraction.

"It's definitely a destination store," Lewis says. "People bring family from out of town when they visit so they can see all the unique items and cute pets we have."

Land of Paws has pounced on the pet industry by achieving the perfect balance



for all consumers, pairing basic needs with over-the-top extras. Offering gourmet treats, plush bedding, top-of-the-line toys and trend-setting clothing styles for dogs and cats, Land of Paws is much more than a pet store. It's the couture connection for everything pet owners could need and want for their four-legged friends. From polka-dots and plaids to ruffles and rhinestones, this pet shop assures your pet will be the best-dressed on the block.

Wardrobe and indulgences aside, Land of Paws also carries all the essential pet products such as nutritional food and practical carriers. And while merchandise at this posh spot changes frequently, one thing remains constant.

"We know it's important to keep the basic supplies a pet owner needs as well as offer the fun items," Lewis says.

Another thing that hasn't changed in over a decade of operation? Customer service.

"We are proud to offer impeccable service," Lewis says. "People know our staff is very informed and will go the extra step to help."

Lewis and Carey grew up around this business (Lewis' parents are co-owners Dr.

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and Patty Daly) and worked in the original location from the time they were old enough to have a job. In that time, they've seen changes as the nationwide trend in high-end pet supplies took off.

"Our pet bedding used to be neutral," Carey explains. "Now we have swatch-books of materials to choose from so people can coordinate with any decor. Not only is there bedding, now people can buy coordinating blankets and pillows!"

The bakery and food sections have also expanded over the years. Land of Paws offers decorated gourmet treats for nearly every occasion and others specified to each season. Carrying more than 14 lines of holistic pet food, Land of Paws continues to be on the cutting edge of the pet food market.

"We research animal nutrition and offer all-natural pet food because a pet's diet is so important," Lewis says.

"People view pets as family members," Carey adds. "They celebrate with us."

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Land of Paws has the perfect fresh-baked goodie any dog would love.

Land of Paws also holds seasonal events and pet photo shoots.

“This year, the Easter Bunny will be visiting the stores and will be available for pet pictures!” Lewis says.

During the Halloween season, the 135th Street location holds a pet parade called the Monster Bash that people look forward to every year. Complete with a photo contest, costumes and prizes, the Monster Bash is a great event for pet owners to socialize with their pets. In fact, any day at Land of Paws is the perfect day to bring in your pet for socialization. Sometimes people ask if dogs are allowed in the store.

“We say, ‘Of course! They’re our best customers!’” Lewis says.

Land of Paws earned nationwide recognition as Retailer of the Year by Pet Product News in 2005-06. ❖

For more information, visit their e-commerce site at www.landofpaws.com.



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