

Business course helps alumna pamper pooches for profit

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Private suites, gourmet meals, fresh linens, one-on-one personal attention and a free continental breakfast are normally amenities one imagines a four-star hotel to have. But 2003 University of Wisconsin Oshkosh graduate Sara Bonk, envisioned those features – and more – for northeast Wisconsin’s pampered pooches and finicky felines.

While a student at UW Oshkosh, Bonk was required to develop a business plan for an entrepreneurship class. After graduation, she just made a few tweaks and opened the state’s only luxury pet hotel, the Wagg Inn Pet Hotel, in DePere, Wis.

“My education at UW Oshkosh, along with growing up with a family-owned business, prepared me well,” said Bonk. “In an entrepreneurship class we were required to develop a business plan. Knowing exactly what I wanted to do with my business degree when I finished college, I prepared my business plan for Wagg Inn. After I graduated I made a few tweaks to the plan and took it to the bank to obtain a loan to start my business.”

The Wagg Inn Pet Hotel offers boarding, grooming and doggie daycare. “Guests” that pass an introductory test that assesses their temperament are permitted to play in either an indoor or outdoor environment under staff supervision all day long. The outdoor play area includes a “Pooch Playground” and a “Woofie Waterpark,” while the indoor environment includes a heated floor and floor-to-ceiling windows. At night, the pampered pooches retire to individual suites for dinner and relaxation.

“Wagg Inn is not your typical kennel or boarding facility,” said Bonk. “It was a dream of mine to open this pet hotel since I was 8 years old and that dream is now a reality!”

Sheryl Hanson contributed to this article.