

## **Canine And Cat Coddling Coming To Charlton**

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New business aims to capture dollars of loving pet owners

Web cams, flat screen TVs and group playtime will be calling local dogs soon when Barbara and Tim Gingras open a high-end doggie daycare business in Charlton called the Barkwood Inn.

The couple has sold pedigree dogs for over a decade now, and in an effort to tap into a \$43 billion pet care industry they're expanding into a home away from home for pets while their owners are at work.

The Gingrases own Puppies Galore in Charlton, where they sell puppies of various breeds. They hope to finish building and open the Barkwood Inn along Route 20 in August. It will be a 7,000-square-foot building with 42 individual decorated suites or rooms for dogs and cats, as well as indoor and outdoor play areas.



Barbara and Tim Gingras at their home with their French poodles.  
Dream Job

“For years my dream has been to own a place like this, where the animals didn’t have to be in cages, which just adds to their stress when they’re away from their owners,” said Barbara Gingras. She is a 1992 Becker College graduate of its veterinary technician program and has worked at veterinary clinics and research centers.

The U.S. pet industry is apparently a good business to be in, according to the trade group American Pet Products Manufacturers Association, which estimates that pet expenditures

will be \$43.4 billion this year, up from last year's \$41.2 billion. Of that \$43.4 billion, \$3.2 billion will be spent on pet services like grooming and boarding.

And pet owners are taking advantage of luxury services for their animals, according to The [Mercanti Group](#), an investment banking firm in Minneapolis that gathers research on a variety of industries.

In 2006, well-off families spent \$1.74 billion on grooming, boarding and other pet-related services, according to [Mercanti](#).

A national company, Camp Bow Wow, offers daycare and longer boarding at 52 centers in the United States and Canada, and is \$500 million business, according to [Mercanti](#).

The Gingrases will see how the Barkwood Inn does for the first couple of years, Gingras said, and if it does well, they hope to expand its size and other amenities like walking trails and a dog-shaped swimming pool.

"We want to have a place that both owners and dogs look forward to coming to," she said.

The luxury doggie daycare building will be set on a seven acre parcel and will include an apartment on the grounds for round-the-clock security observation, including once it is technically closed for the evening.

The dogs will be pampered with their own flat screen TVs for entertainment and there will also be web cams in the individual rooms and the group exercise areas so pet owners can check on their animals while they're away. There will be three large inside and three large outside play areas.

The cats will have windows in their areas, with birdfeeders outside to keep them busy and three-tiered cat condos.

It will be decorated to look like a home, with radiant floor heating, central air conditioning and very efficient air filters in the air exchanges.

"People who work all day may be worried about their pets being destructive while they're gone, or bored and lonely," Gingras said, adding that her business will work with pet owners to develop the best plan for their pets.