

Brush Buddy

Happy dogs are dirty dogs. They go to the beach, roost in the sand, swim in the sea, roll in mud, fall in creeks. Then, before your four-legged, tail-wagging, furry friend can go home and pass out in an exhausted heap of bliss, they usually have to get in your car. The dirt and dog-hair deposits that this transportation reality leaves you with are, as any dog owner will tell you, one of the least enjoyable parts of hanging out with man's best friend. Sand-crusting hair in the backseat, paw prints on the kitchen floor, and soggy patches on the couch are pretty much par for the course in an active dog owner's life — that is, until now. From Santa Barbarian David Fortson comes the Brush Buddy — a slice of simple, fully functional genius that not only cleans up your hound before he/she hops aboard, but in the process also brings you and your pup closer together.

Part towel, part brush, and part massager, the Brush Buddy idea came to Fortson during a self-described "moment of epiphany on the beaches of Santa Barbara" after he and his dog, Roman, found themselves ready to head home after a long day of sand and saltwater fun. With a clean car, a dirty dog, and no towel or brush in sight, Fortson had one of those necessity-driven "aha!" experiences that give birth to most good inventions. A little over two feet long and 10 inches wide, the Brush Buddy is, on one side, a soft towel perfect for drying off your dog. Flip it over for thousands of soft, 100 percent recycled rubber bristles that massage your beast while also working to brush off hair, dirt, and sand. Even better, thanks to two oven mitt-like hand pockets at either end, the Brush Buddy lets you bear-hug your dog while you do the dirty work — a feature that will make even the most towel-phobic dog wag their tail while getting the rubdown. Also, unlike your dog, the Brush Buddy can be thrown in a washing machine. — **Ethan Stewart**

The Brush Buddy was launched publicly this week, and retails for \$29.95. For info, go to thebrushbuddy.com.



Dioji Offers Owner-Approved Pooch Pampering

by **Aly Comingore**

Nestled unassumingly on the northern end of Goleta, Bryce and Jeannie Wendel's Dioji K-9 Resort & Athletic Club is anything but a day spa for spoiled pups and privileged dog owners. The 10,000-square-foot complex — which offers three age- and size-designated play areas, including a bone-shaped swimming pool — is owned, run, and staffed by a bevy of dog lovers. "We have at least one associate for every 10 dogs ... which is way better than any kindergarten kid-to-teacher ratio," said Bryce. "And all of our employees are certified pet technicians who know first aid." The staff members, who run Dioji's expansive merchandise area and office as well as the facility's enormous "front yard," are all smiles as they romp with their

Kirby, a happy customer, leaps for joy at Goleta's Dioji K-9 Resort & Athletic Club.

canine clients, throwing balls, running laps, and indulging in quality snuggle time with some of their smaller, sleeper residents.

The Wendels, both 31, explain that they made the jump from investment bankers to doggy daycare owners for a number of reasons. Most importantly, the couple recalled their less-than-pleasing past experiences with daytime dog boarding. "At other places, I would drop off Kirby [my yellow lab retriever] and never see where he'd be staying. When I came to pick her up, I'd ask the employees, 'How was she today?' and they'd say, 'Great! Who are you here to pick up?'" Jeannie explained. At Dioji, every place a dog can be seen by human visitors. Grooming facilities, overnight sleeping spaces (a spacious "bedroom" in every sense of the word), and indoor play spaces are all equipped with large viewing windows, and outdoor play areas are the first thing you see upon visiting the cage-free canine sanctuary.

Along with daytime doggy care, Dioji offers a slew of packages and services — all for reasonable prices — that include things as helpful as transportation to and from the facility

Molly Inspires

When Mandy Evans picked out a three-month-old pug named Molly from a breeder six years ago, she had no idea how her new friend would change her life. At first, her new pug was active and energetic, but just a few weeks later, Molly was suddenly unable to walk on all fours. Testing revealed a birth defect that twisted Molly's spine, cutting off the nerves to her hind legs. For Evans, who had just lost a cat to cancer, the news was devastating. Luckily, her vet gave her information about Doggon' Wheels, a company that makes rehabilitating wheelchairs for animals. Evans ordered one for Molly, and said, "After an hour, Molly was totally used to it, but it still took me six months to realize Molly was a normal dog, and not a disabled dog."

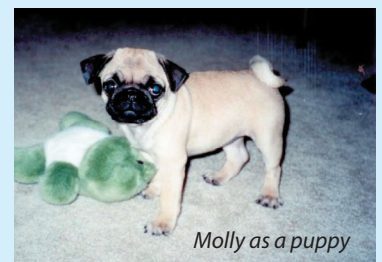
A few years later, Evans's niece asked her to bring Molly to her classroom for show-and-tell, and the experience showed Evans what a powerful little pug Molly could be. "When you talk to children about a differently-abled animal, it takes away their fear and allows kids to ask questions about what life is like for Molly. Then we can start talking about people with different abilities, and

educate them on human social issues," Evan explained.

Since that first trip, Evans and Molly have spread awareness to more than 50 classrooms, and the response is overwhelming. "I get letters from kids who have been touched by our program, thanking Molly for helping them understand differently-abled people better, and it's so rewarding," said Evans. She also launched the Web site MySpecialDog.com and MollyInspiresFoundation.org to provide resources for owners of special-needs pets, and to share Molly's message. Evans also plans to launch BreederIntegrity.org, which will hold breeders accountable for responsible practices, to make sure fewer animals are born with disabilities.

"Molly's taught me so much — to be more aware, and to live for the moment," said Evans, who hopes to one day have programs like Molly Inspires in classrooms across the nation. To learn more about how you can help spread this powerful message, visit MollyInspiresFoundation.org.

— **Rachel Weight**



Molly as a puppy

The

4

7

7

Dioji K-9 Resort & Athletic Club is located at 7340 Hollister Avenue in Goleta. Call 685-6068 or visit dioji.com.

(located at 7340 Hollister Ave.) and puppy socialization training to items as indulgent as rejuvenating massage and aqua fitness. But the Wendels explain that even the most luxurious of treatments are a far cry from pup pampering. Older, injured, post-op, and arthritic dogs are the most common massage and aqua rehab clients. And they benefit exponentially from the professional, one-on-one sessions.

Aside from providing an ideal place for potentially cooped-up dogs to spend the day, the Wendels offer overnight boarding and a fully loaded grooming salon — complete with a post-blow-dry "Zen Den" to keep Fido fresh until he's ready to head home. Dioji's 24-hour stay even ensures a peaceful nighttime slumber, with a fully equipped sleeping suite that features cushions, crates, pillows, and human beds, all meant to approximate the comforts of home. And a staff member is on the premises at all times, often hunkering down for the night with their four-legged friends, both to give comfort and keep watch in case of emergency. "These are [our clients'] kids," the Wendels explained. "And coming here is just like having a nanny." With their giddy toddler at their feet, and 20-plus happy dogs frolicking before them, one can't imagine a better, cleaner, or happier daycare center than this.