

## **SUCCESS STORY** **Portland District Office**

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### **For Mobile West Linn Couple, It's Washing Cats and Dogs**

Their business joins a trend with an animal grooming van  
that drives up to the customer's front door



With two dogs and two cats, Dave Faul (left) and his wife, Sandra Yates, are definitely animal lovers. But when Faul suggested they start a business washing dogs and cats in a van parked at clients' curbs, Yates said, "Thinking he was nuts was an understatement."

Nearly three years later, however, the West Linn couple's Wash'n Roll Pet Grooming business has expanded to two vans driving to appointments throughout the metropolitan area.

Mobile pet groomers are more common on the East Coast and in California than in the Northwest, said Faul, 50 who was an account executive with a women's apparel company for 25 years before starting his own business. However, the service is

beginning to catch on in the region. At least three similar businesses are operating in the metropolitan area, said Angela Jones of Portland, a pet groomer for 10 years who went mobile a few months before Faul and Yates turned the key in their first van. "In a few months, a friend of mine in Estacada plans to start another mobile grooming business," said Jones, 44, who has a waiting list of potential clients but no plans to expand Angela's Pet Styling Professional Mobile Grooming beyond her single van. Instead, she refers people to Wash'n Roll.

Faul began research for a new business when he realized his job could evaporate in a corporate merger or store closure. He learned that the United States has a \$30 billion pet industry. He also looked at who spends a lot of those dollars. "The baby boomers, whose children are getting older or who are empty-nesters, are willing to spend money on keeping their fur kids happy," he said.

Yates, 47, was a real estate analyst for an agricultural lending company before taking over Wash'n Roll's business office. "It's quite a bit different from what I was doing," she said, "but it's a lot more fun."

Faul attended a pet grooming school in Albany for six months, and Yates wrote a business plan. Local bankers said the business had to operate for two or three years before they could get a business loan,

Faul said, so the couple paid their own startup costs. They also received assistance from SCORE: Counselors to America's Small Business, a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration. SCORE members volunteer as counselors for small entrepreneurs. "They were really helpful," Yates said, "and it was surprising that it was all free."

Growing mostly by word of mouth, the business now has three part-time and three full-time employees, Yates said. Prices are based on breed, size of the animal and condition of the coat. A team recently washed and groomed a 200-pound Newfoundland for \$200, she said, but a sleek dachshund may have a \$35 bill. Prices for cats can range from \$50 to \$125.

Two people work in each van, designed by an Indiana pet groomer who now markets the vehicles. Each van has a tub, automatic shampoo dispenser, rinsing hose and grooming table. One dog can be in the tub while another is having its coat trimmed, Faul said. However, cats are another matter. "We do just one cat at a time," he said. "But they don't take that long, and there's nothing better than a clean cat."

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