



Charles V. Tines / The Detroit News

"There will be a trained facilitator on the premises at all times," says Craig Lin, co-owner of the Dog Centers of America facility in Wixom.

Local spotlight

Wixom canine service aims to outdo rivals

Owners of Dog Centers of America outlet will offer services around the clock for pet owners.

By Megan Swoyer / Special to The Detroit News

WIXOM -- As a boy growing up in Livonia, Craig Lin's pet tastes extended way beyond the usual. "We had racing pigeons, an alligator, horses, all kinds of animals," Lin said.

These days, the 48-year-old animal lover still tends to animals, but now in a professional way. He will realize one of his lifelong dreams as he opens Dog Centers of America in Wixom Aug. 1. Lin co-owns the business with Steven Subelsky of Farmington Hills.

The 11,000-square-foot dog complex offers canine daycare, grooming, boarding and training. Lin hopes to fetch more business than his competitors by offering around-the-clock care.

"There will be a trained facilitator on the premises at all times," Lin said.

The facility is structured to enhance a dog's health, Lin said.

A huge romp room, divided with areas for multiple-size dogs, a puppy area and Web cameras are just some of the amenities.

"The Web cams are great because pet owners can watch their dogs play or train while they're at work," Lin said.

Trainer Alysia Frenette teaches dogs everything from personal protection and tracking to obedience. Special decor helps set the facility apart from other kennels.

Lin pointed to park benches where visitors can sit and watch, creative murals and artificial fire hydrants, trees and boulders.

"Dogs need exercise, a place to romp and they can't always get that in a home," Lin said.

Professional trainers profile each dog.

"They interview the owners, look at temperament of the dog, find out about allergies and more," Lin said.

A profile is especially important if a dog gets lost while on vacation with its owner.

In that case, a special tag on the dog alerts the finder of the dog to call Lin's facility.

There, a staff member can look up the dog's profile and provide information about the owner, any dog illnesses and medications.

Situated near the Novi-Wixom border, the location should breed plenty of success, Lin predicts.

Americans own about 65 million dogs, according to the latest survey of the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association.

Thirty-nine percent of U.S. households (or 40.6 million) own at least one dog.

"The demographic mix out here in Wixom, with commerce and residential growth, fits right in," Lin said.

"The response so far has been overwhelming. People stop us to show us pictures of their dogs."

Lin is planning an open house from 5-8 p.m. July 27.

As for competitors, Lin says, "There is lots of competition and some good people out there."

Boardingkennels.org, an organization that tracks kennels in various regions, lists about 65 kennels in Michigan.

But Lin isn't worried about what other kennels offer and is focusing on his strengths.

In the last few weeks, Lin's challenges have been meeting deadlines for inspection, certificate of occupancy, license and the open house.

"But I thrive on this kind of pressure. I laid it all out like a story board."

Megan Swoyer is a Metro Detroit freelance writer.

Dog Centers of America

- What: An 11,000-square-foot facility that offers dog day care, grooming, boarding and training.
- Where: 46926 Magellan, Wixom.
- Employees: Eight.
- Contacts: (248) 960-0800, www.dogcenters.com.
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