

PAWSITIVELY RADIANT

New salon pampers Swampscott's four-legged friends

By Sandi Goldfarb

Clients come to Swampscott's newest spa for a day of beauty. They leave with glossy hair, manicured nails, sparkling smiles, wagging tails and a jaunty bandana. At The Pooch Pawlor, proprietor Erin Ago happily cares for her four-legged friends with a gentle touch.

The Pooch Pawlor, which opened at 664 Humphrey Street in December, is attracting a growing list of clients — some newcomers, others who brought their beloved pets to Ago during her six years at a Marblehead-based pet salon. "I'm kind of like a trusted hairdresser," she said. "Clients were happy to follow me here."

Appointments — which may last as long as three hours depending on the dog's size and breed — include bathing, trimming, nail and dental care and soothing facials. Ago is sensitive to the individual needs of her patrons, both the pups and their humans. Because services are offered by appointment-only, the atmosphere at The Pooch Pawlor is calm and each dog receives Ago's full attention.

On a recent visit, a parade of potential customers stopped in to meet Ago and check out the new, full-service grooming establishment.

"The Swampscott community has been very welcoming," said Ago. "People want to support a new business and they are very appreciative of the services we provide. Their dogs are part of the family and they want to take good care of them."

A grooming station features a bin brimming with fluffy towels, a deep oversized sink, a large, rolling tool chest filled with brushes, clippers, sheers and combs, and a table that raises and lowers to meet each dog's comfort level. >>>



Murphy, a labradoodle, gets a trim from Pooch Pawlor owner Erin Ago.



Photos: Reba Saldanha

"I treat every dog like it's my own," she said. "I want the experience to be as pleasant as possible."

The Revere native, who still calls the seaside city home, received her training at Ocean View Kennel's accredited professional grooming school. Each year, to expand her knowledge and skills, Ago attends seminars, conferences and trade shows.

"I'm always interested in furthering my education, testing new equipment and learning new techniques," said Ago, who is a member of the New England Professional Groomers Association and is certified in pet CPR.

According to Ago, grooming should start when pets are young so that the experience is familiar and positive. "It shouldn't be stressful," she said.

Experts suggest that dogs be groomed every few months, and more frequently for long-haired breeds or those that are active outdoors. More than keeping pets looking and smelling good, Ago believes that regular grooming can contribute to an animal's overall health and well-being. "I see some dogs monthly, which is more than a veterinarian does," she said. "If I notice problems, I share that information with owners."

In between appointments, dogs benefit from frequent brushing or combing to prevent matting. And good home care helps get dogs accustomed sprucing up. "Grooming is also a bonding experience between owners and their pets," said Ago.

When she's not focused on her canine clientele, Ago is busy working on plans to expand the salon's space and offerings. She hopes to add walk-in bathing areas and a retail corner which will feature locally-made treats, comfy beds, scented soaps and decorative collars.

The Pooch Pawlor is a family affair and Ago's husband, Anthony, and step-daughter, Gianna, help out whenever they can. The active mother beams when she talks about her family, which also includes her son, Anthony Jr., born in 2016, and two shelter dogs, Sookie and Shamus.

"Shamus ignited my passion for animals," she said.

A few years back, Ago worked in Revere, caring for dogs like Shamus who were surrendered to the city's kennel. "That experience changed my entire outlook,"

she said. ■

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