



DOGGY DAYCARE

THE WAY WE LIVE HOURS: 6:30 A.M. TO 8:30 P.M. COST: \$1 AN HOUR. ACTIVITIES: WALKS, GAMES, NAPS, CUDDLING. HUMAN DAYCARE SHOULD BE SO GOOD. BY CHARLES HIRSHBERG / PHOTOGRAPHY BY THEO WESTENBERGER

Class photo: Dixie's in the doghouse; Halea paws the roof; Bob takes the tunnel; Ketch (the daycare center was named after him) waves howdy; Paco sits at his desk; Bear hangs back; Skylar and Tav guard the ramp; Penny guards the floor; Riot's fenced in; and Spencer peeks from a tire.



Dixie's day: It starts with breakfast, hand-fed by owner Wendy Patton (1). Arriving at K.E.T.C.H. at 6:30 a.m., Dixie hits the treadmill (2) to take the edge off her considerable energy. Then, after a rest in her crate, it's on to jumping (3), tunneling (4) and a spirited game of catch (5). When nature calls, she lines up with classmates (6) and awaits permission to go out. Afternoon obedience lessons include ramp walking (7), which boosts confidence in timid dogs (Dixie's O.K. in the confidence department), and games supervised by trainer Wendy Pape (8). Andy Patton takes Dixie home at six p.m. They have just enough stamina left for a game of sunset Frisbee before conking out (9).



The strangest thing about the place is the barking—there is none. Dogs are everywhere, leaping over obstacles, gnawing yellow balls, investigating one another's derrieres and generally having the time of their doggy lives. But there is no barking, for one simple reason: It's against the rules.

Welcome to K.E.T.C.H. (K-9 Educational Training Center of Hillsborough), a 10,000-square-foot canine daycare center near Tampa. Believe it or not, places like this are springing up all over the country. A brisk economy means people have more money to spend on their dogs, while long hours at the office leave little time to spend at home. And many breeders are now reluctant to sell pets to people who intend to leave them alone all day. Daycare options range from stark kennels to over-the-top spas where dogs are

entertained with stories or rock music.

K.E.T.C.H. strikes a happy medium. "If dogs want to play here, and they do, they have to learn—and behave," says K.E.T.C.H. cofounder Wendy Pape. Each day, she leads packs of dogs in educational romps involving balls, tunnels, ramps and hurdles. Any pooch who bullies a classmate or disregards Pape's commands is sent to the doghouse (actually, a fenced-off corner). There the offender is forced to sit and watch the fun, usually with sad, repentant eyes.

Of course, dogs require more than just training and recreation. They need to sniff fresh air and, more important, to do their "business." Walks at K.E.T.C.H. are elaborate rituals. Dogs must sit patiently as the front door is opened, and then again as it is closed behind them. Each animal's drop-

pings are carefully examined by staff. "Mostly we look for 'UFOs,' things that could make a dog sick," says Pape. In the past, UFOs have included tennis balls, pantyhose, coins and, once, half of a \$100 bill. (The other half was never found.) Such findings are carefully recorded and reported to the dog's owner.

Indeed, just about everything that happens at K.E.T.C.H. is carefully monitored, from a morning jog on the treadmill, to a midday snooze, to an evening obedience class. "We try to tire out each dog every day, not just in body but in mind as well," says Pape. "After all," she adds, reciting K.E.T.C.H.'s unofficial motto, "a dog's mind is a terrible thing to waste." **LIFE**