

Hound dogs rock money management firm

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Stacey Carver offers a treat to Larry, left,... (Photos by Scott Stafford / Berkshire Eagle Staff)

PITTSFIELD

Although Edith, Larry and Henry spend some or all of every weekday at the office, they don't work like dogs.

When they get there in the morning, the three Basset Hounds move down the hall, stopping in to say hello to the employees, who invariably give them a canine cookie, then they go find their favorite spots around the office and take their morning nap.

The three are rescued dogs that were taken in as fosters by husband and wife team Allen Harris and Stacey Carver. The two are also principals of Berkshire Money Management, which recently relocated to its newly renovated office building on Merrill Road.

All the considerations

When deciding to find a new location to house the growing financial investment firm, Allen and Carver kept in mind the needs of the business, its customers, its employees, and their dogs. They bought the two lots adjacent to the new location to give them enough room to install a fenced-in doggie park and for their daily walks.

"We've been bringing our dogs to work with us ever since we opened our business together," Harris said.

"One of our priorities was to have a place for our dogs," said Carver, who also serves as president and adoption coordinator of the volunteer, non-profit New England Basset Hound Rescue.

The dogs are fixtures at the office -- so much so that "hiring and retaining employees is part of the dog-routine as well," said Harris, president and portfolio manager for Berkshire Money Management. "New hires must be Canine-American-friendly."

The partners are well aware that their canine business associates are not typical in the average money management firm.

Try down the street

And if a prospective customer doesn't like doing business in an office that is so inclined, that's okay.

"We know going into it there will be people who think it's unprofessional and that's fine," said Carver, who is the vice president of operations. "That's part of the cost of doing business with dogs in our lives."

They do try to minimize the impact on newcomers, though.

"We know that not everybody loves dogs, so we've got the gate to keep them from jumping up on people when they come in," Carver said.

But the pair keep things in perspective by realizing it's probably not that big a deal.

"At the end of the day, nobody is going to be making their money decisions based on whether they do or do not love dogs," Harris noted.

The three dogs are unique personalities:

The youngest and blondest, Henry, is about five years old and the most outgoing. He loves everyone. He was rescued from a "high kill" shelter in Tennessee where if a dog isn't claimed in 10 days, it is euthanized.

Larry, with a brown and white coat, is six years old, and partner-in-crime with Henry. The two are inseparable, and at the same time, jealous of each other. Larry is the whiner of the bunch, and loves attention.

At 10 years old, Edith has a light brown and white coat and is the wall flower of the family. She takes a long time to warm up to strangers. She came to the house as a foster with her brother Archie. The two had lived with a woman for 10 years, until her failing health rendered her unable to care for them.

Shortly after they joined the gang, Archie passed away. Since then, Edith has been somewhat somber. But once she gets to know someone, she's their unquestioning pal.

Edith took a shine to one of the employees, and if she disappears, they usually find her asleep under his desk while he's working.

Aside from caring for their three full-time dogs, Harris and Carver are fostering a fourth dog more often than not, and most fosters last two to three weeks.

"We usually just foster one dog at a time," Harris said. "Four in one house is a whole lot of dog."

They've been doing it since late 2006, and have fostered almost 20 dogs since then. In 2008, they were named Foster Family of the year by New England Basset Hound Rescue.

And while the rewards for fostering rescued pooches may not be material, they are substantial.

"You put a whole lot more into it than you get out of it," Harris said. "But there is a tremendous psychic reward -- there are a whole lot of pets out there who don't have the opportunity to feel loved. I can't imagine not doing this. It is our life."