



Ranch employees relay experiences with home business

Alex Fulton // Asst. Editor

At the age of six, sophomore Gabby Emken would climb the slides, and jump on the ramps. She would hop from one platform to the other imagining herself as a show dog, the champion of the Westminster Dog Show. While her friends would travel miles away to reach the nearest park playground, her form of entertainment was in her own backyard.

Emken and her family own a dog daycare service known as DogBoy's Dog Ranch. When Emken's father moved from California to Texas, he got a position at a local dog boarding facility, however after subpar experiences, sought to create his own all-inclusive ranch.

"When I was younger I really wished that I had grown up in a two story house in a neighborhood, I thought stairs were cool, but now I really appreciate living out here," Emken said. "We have an acre of land between us and our neighbors so I've never had to worry about crime or making too much noise."

The 15-acre ranch behind Emken's home has an indoor and outdoor training arena, two kennels and a five-acre park. In addition to day care facilities, DogBoy's has equipment

where guests can train their dogs, as well as ponds and pools for the pets to play in.

"It's cool to grow up around dogs because I learned dog behavior and body language at a young age so I think that's helped me developed people skills in a way," Emken said. "Plus everybody loves dogs so it's a good conversation starter. I mean it's not common to meet somebody who owns basically a doggy YMCA."

Last summer, sophomore Alyssa Herrera and senior Megan Vickery developed a new position at the ranch, called The Social Squad. After hearing about DogBoy's from Emken, the two convinced Emken's mother to develop the job. For an additional fee, visiting guests can have their dogs pictured and featured on Facebook or can opt for the Social Sampler, an all-inclusive package, which also includes Instagram and Snapchat.

"Every dog is different, and they all respond to things in very different ways," Vickery said. "It's been difficult learning how to recognize their different responses and deal with each in the right way. Most of the dogs are really great and well behaved, but sometimes the most unexpected things can make them nervous or upset."

For Vickery, the position allows her

to practice her photography skills. Next year, Vickery hopes to major in business, so the ranch offers an inside look into local companies.

"I've been able to gain a little bit of business experience, which I think will help me to put some of what I'll eventually be learning about in business in college into perspective," Vickery said. "Also, my position at DogBoy's is a little bit more independent and flexible than I would have working at Chick-fil-A or somewhere else, which I think will help me stand out when applying to other jobs or internships in the future."

Vickery's conflicting band schedule has limited the part-time job opportunities she can pursue. Ultimately, the small, local feeling of DogBoy's has created a sense of closeness between the employees.

"Everyone really cares about what they do and about all the customers," Vickery said. "Someone could pull up on any given day and one of the people in the office will recognize them just by the car they drive. Everyone is just super dedicated to getting to know both the dogs and their owners so they can all get the best experience possible, and that's a great environment to work in."

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