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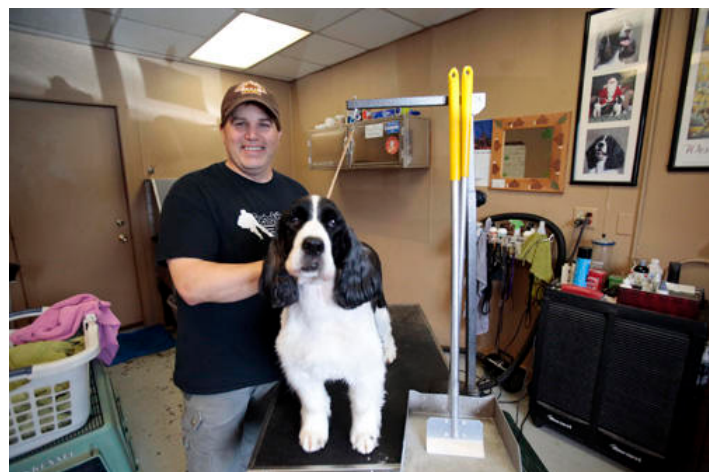
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Berkshire companies find gold in cleaning up dog poop

By Dick Lindsay, Berkshire Eagle Staff

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 Tom Phillips of Shamrock Professional Dog Grooming and Dog Waste Removal and Fergus, his 13-year-old springer spaniel, pose with the 'pooper scooper,' right, on the grooming table in Pittsfield. Wednesday, July 9, 2014. Stephanie Zollshan / Berkshire Eagle Staff / photos.berkshireeagle.com (Stephanie Zollshan)

As the master of a Bernese mountain dog and St. Bernard, I'm constantly in pooper-scooper mode.

Armed with a 30-inch wide leaf-rake and curved plastic snow shovel, I regularly remove dog waste from my yard in Lee. A feces-free lawn is important before guests visit and prior to cutting the grass.

Occasionally, I miss a pile of dog dung, finding the poop only after it gets stuck to the front tires of my riding mower.

Yuck!

Aimee Marshall and Tim Knolmeyer don't have that problem, despite four terrier-mix canines roaming their fenced-in backyard. In February, the husband and wife decided they needed the services of Spot and Fido Pooper Scooper of New Lebanon, N.Y. Once a week, owner Bruce Bates cleans up after Gizmo, Taza, Astro and Limbo, providing, in part, piece of mind for the very busy Pittsfield couple.

"It's nice to know Bruce is here every Friday keeping the yard clean," said Aimee Marshall. "My husband and I work crazy hours and if I'm not traveling, he's on the road.

"I also have a [9-year-old] nephew who comes over to play and it's nice to know he won't get into any [poop]," she added.



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Bates has found the majority of his customers hire him for convenience and because he takes the poop with him. After collecting the feces in five gallon buckets, he loads the containers in his pick-up and properly disposes it.

"I scoop all the poop I can find," he said. "I work with a company that handles septic waste and take it immediately to them."

Spot and Fido is one of a handful of area businesses relatively new to the dog waste removal industry that has been a godsend for dog owners in major metropolitan areas the past 20 years or more.

According to [Pooper-Scooper.com \(http://Pooper-Scooper.com\)](http://Pooper-Scooper.com), some cities have up to four dog-waste removal companies providing a practical and legal way to dispose of dog doo. The website cites lack of time, physical disabilities and the stink factor as reasons dog owners hire someone else to pick up and haul away their pet's feces.

In addition, some cities prohibit dog waste from being placed in with residential refuse.

Bates and proprietors of Shamrock Grooming and Dog Waste Removal of Pittsfield found dozens of dog owners living in the more rural Berkshires also preferred someone else scoop their dogs' poop. They each began their dog waste removal service nearly six years ago and do so year round.

Tom Phillips, co-owner of Shamrock with wife Paula, said some first-time customers are surprised how low-tech the clean up process is -- they rake up the poop and bag it.

"One woman I went to in Stephentown [N.Y.] thought I would come armed like the 'Ghostbusters,'" he said, referring to the characters who used high-tech proton backpacks to zap specters in the 1984 supernatural comedy movie.

Aside from convenience, Phillips finds many of his customers can't stomach the idea of scooping dog poop.

Organizers of the privately maintained French Park dog park in Egremont had trouble finding enough volunteers to police the canine playground, according to Bruce Gventer. So five years ago, park officials hired Shamrock to thoroughly clean up the dog exercise facility twice a week to ensure it remained an enjoyable place for man's best friends and their humans.

"It makes a world of difference, otherwise we would have to close the park," Gventer said. "If you have a dog park, waste removal should be atop the to-do list."

Aside from the sight and smell, dog feces are a health hazard and a major pollutant of waterways throughout the U.S., according to federal and local health officials.

In 1991, the Environmental Protection Agency placed dog waste -- wrought with bacteria, worms and other parasites -- in the same health category as oil and toxic chemicals. Two years ago, USA Today reported that in just a couple of days, 100 dogs can deposit enough bacteria to temporarily close a bay, and all watershed areas within 20 miles of it, to swimming and fishing. Officials in Seattle consider waste from the city's million dogs to be a major pollution source of Puget Sound. The newspaper also cited dog waste as a major source of water contamination in Clearwater, Fla., Arlington, Va. and Boise, Idaho.

Dog waste is also a health hazard before it reaches the water. according to Dr. Julie Shanahan of Valley Veterinary Services in Lee.

"The reason why dogs aren't allowed on beaches, if you step on their poop the parasites can get into your skin," she said.



In an effort to minimize local dog waste pollution, many Berkshire communities have bylaws requiring residents to pick up after their pooches when walking them in public. At popular dog walking areas such as Cole Field at Williams College and the Adams end of the Ashuwillticook Trail, plastic bag dispensers are provided to encourage canine owners to clean up after their pets.

While dog waste removal is serious business, Bates and Phillips have light-hearted company slogans. Bates reminds customers, "neglected poop pollutes" while Philips' motto is, "Your dog's pile makes us smile."

"I tell my kids 'Be a canine sanitation engineer'" said Phillips. "We have a lot of fun with it."

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I tell my kids I'm a canine sanitation engineer," said Phillips, "we have a lot of fun with it.

To reach Dick Lindsay: rlindsay@berkshireeagle.com (<mailto:rlindsay@berkshireeagle.com>), or (413) 496-6233

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Shamrock Professional Dog Grooming & Dog Waste Removal

1050 South St., Pittsfield

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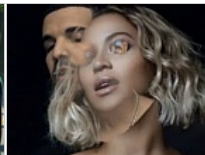
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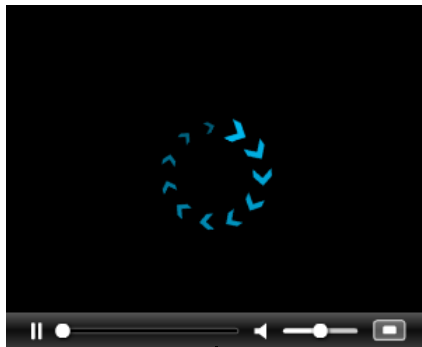
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