

# MYNE TRAINING AND BOARDING FACILITY

ARGYLE, NEW YORK

By Roxanne Hawn



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**K**en and Cheryl Marks have 20 years of dog-training experience, with more than 30 obedience titles between them in the United States and Canada. They also have a deep history in the human health profession: Ken is a retired registered nurse, and Cheryl is a former radiology technician. An on-the-job injury ended her career in the late 1990s.

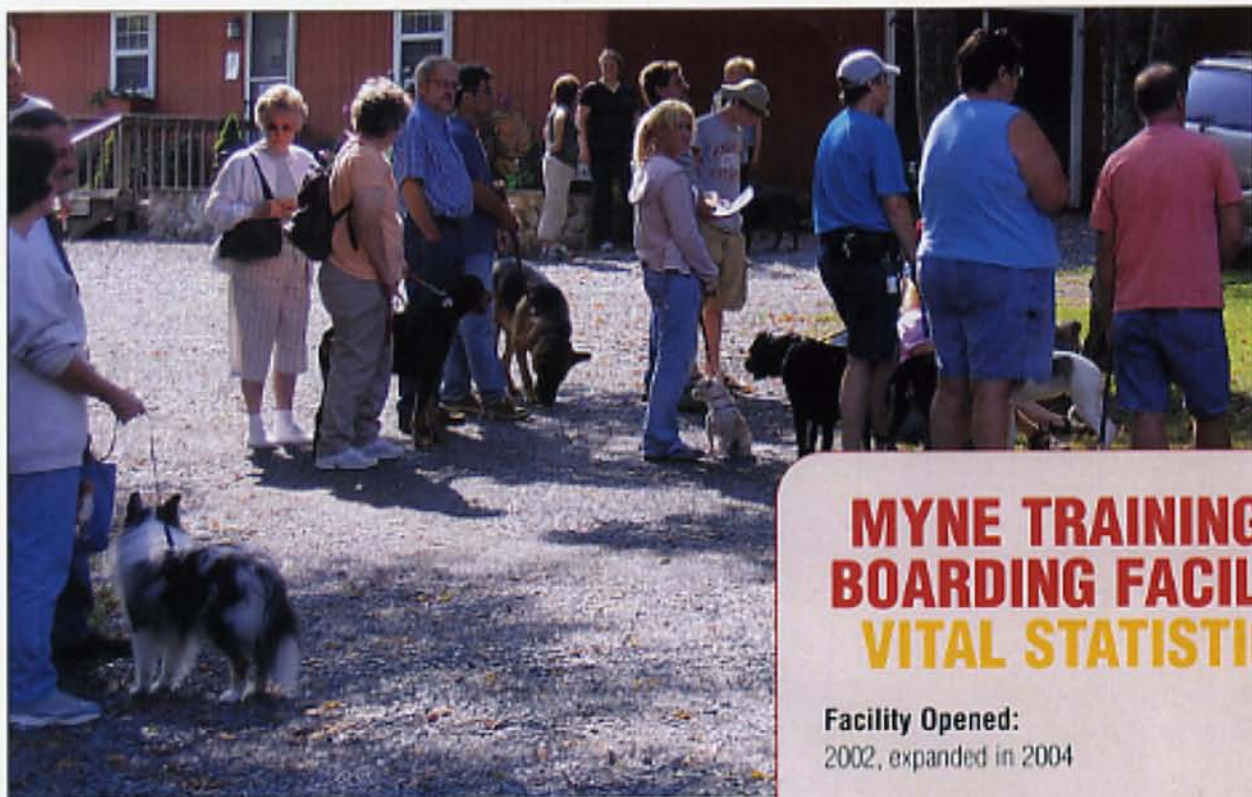
The Marks came to the boarding business a bit by accident. In 2002, they built their intimate facility in rural New York primarily as a training facility and to house

their own furry brood, which at the time included two German shepherds and one Shetland sheepdog. (Today, they have two shepherds and seven shelties.)

"The whole business was put up to encourage the public and dog people with obedience training

and to instruct them, give the public the information to have a better behaved animal," says Cheryl. "That was our main goal."

*"MYNE gets referrals from five nearby veterinary clinics, as well as from the monks of New Skete, a monastery that trains dogs."*



Following the grand opening four years ago, however, their five original runs booked solid, with long waiting lists. Within three months, they added three more runs, which also booked up.

"Then, a year after that," Cheryl explains, "a local veterinary office called us and said, 'We're not boarding any longer, and we're sending everybody to you. You need to do something.' So, we put up the second phase."

Today, MYNE gets referrals from five nearby veterinary clinics, as well as from the monks of New Skete, a monastery that trains dogs.

### THE FACILITY

The two facility buildings, which sit on the same land as the Marks' house, have eight runs each. The main kennel is 1,200 square feet and includes fully padded and matted space for training classes. Thanks to a custom screen attached to the walls, a large garage door can be opened to allow ample air flow. Each area features significant interior wall insulation, which allows for zoned heating,

This page: MYNE clients gather for Dog Day, a popular event at the kennel.

## MYNE TRAINING & BOARDING FACILITY VITAL STATISTICS

### Facility Opened:

2002, expanded in 2004

### Services Offered:

Dog boarding, puppy daycare, grooming, self bathing, training, pet supplies

### No. of Dog Enclosures:

16 indoor/outdoor

### No. of Employees:

2 full-time

### Retail:

Only items they use on their own pets: Flint River Ranch dog food; assortment of toys, collars, leashes, etc.

### Technology Used:

- 1 computer at home, 1 at the kennel
- Phone & fax at kennel, phone also rings at house
- Intercom system between home and kennel

### Advertising:

Local weekly and daily papers, Yellow pages, Web site, Open houses, Sponsor community events

### Hours of Operation:

- Monday – Saturday, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. (closed to the public between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.)
- Sunday, 8 a.m. – Noon



air conditioning, and moisture control. The second building, which Cheryl calls "the garage" because she actually parks her car inside at night, is 1,600 square feet and features the bathing area. Each building also has its own food prep space, including a refrigerator and sink.

The runs in both buildings are indoor-outdoor with guillotine doors. The outside portion of the runs open into fenced-in alleys, which then lead to large, fenced play fields—three on a half acre and another two on a quarter acre.

Interior wood walls are covered in Plexiglas for easier cleaning, and all cement floors and cement block

walls are sealed with epoxy. Each interior run includes a floor drain that's connected to a dry well. The outside runs slope downhill, but there's also a pipe that diverts any excess water.

In the design, the Marks kept their own needs, as well as the safety of the dogs, in mind. The ease of cleaning, the proximity of needed supplies, the security of good fencing all combine to make the facility work with just the two of them.

"If we were to start the process over again, we wouldn't change the layout at all; although my wife would've made it larger from the beginning," Ken says.

### PROCESSES AND SERVICES

Prior to scheduling a dog for boarding, MYNE asks new clients to bring dogs in for a meeting.

"During this visit, we evaluate the dog to see how it acts toward us without any pressure," Ken explains.

MYNE requires current health records with up-to-date vaccinations, including bordatella.



This page: MYNE Kennels utilizes indoor-outdoor runs with guillotine doors.



The Marks also ask for emergency procedures and contacts, along with any special needs like diet and medications. This information is then simply updated for future visits.

Ken and Cheryl also discuss feeding schedules with clients in order to meet each dog's needs. Clients can bring special toys or blankets/beds to use during their dogs' stay.

All dogs get a chance to play in the fenced yards, which feature grass and trees. Occasionally, school-aged kids come and help play with the dogs and burn off excess energy.

"If there's more than one dog in the family, we'll board them in the same kennel as space allows," Ken says. "They'll also be let into the big fenced yard to play together, just as they would at home. Families of dogs are not intermixed for playtime."

The reason? Liability is just too high.

For those who need a refresher, the Marks will also do some obedience work with dogs. They even offer a board-and-train option for people who are too busy or unmotivated to train their dogs themselves. Those critters often stay four or five weeks for in-depth work.

Bathing and grooming are options before dogs go home, as well.

MYNE encourages clients to fill out a post-boarding questionnaire or make a follow-up call about any problems.

"We like to know," Ken says, "so we can make corrections immediately."

While Ken and Cheryl are working, often training dogs between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., they're closed to the public during that block Monday through Saturday.

"The dogs that stay here taught me that," Cheryl says, "because they come in and sleep at that time. So, I respect that."

It also lowers the Marks' stress levels, gives them freedom to work efficiently without interruption, and allows them to handle family needs and enjoy outside interests.

### LEADERSHIP

The Marks take client education seriously, so they get a little frustrated when clients don't heed their recommendations. Any topic is fair game, but Cheryl says, "I'm a

*"They truly enjoy seeing dogs and owners blossom through proper training, and they interact a lot with boarders."*



This page-upper: Two friends enjoy a romp outside.

This page-lower: Ken Marks entered the boarding business a bit by accident. He and his wife started it as a training facility and a place to house their own dogs.

Next page: Bathing and grooming are options before dogs go home.



freak about food. When people come here to board, they have to bring their own food, and 75 percent of it's nasty stuff. We generally don't say anything at that

point, but on your way out the door, we'll hand you a piece of paper and say, 'There are better foods out there, and this is what we recommend.' We're not telling you to buy any of these. We're just making a recommendation that you can do better."

They truly enjoy seeing dogs and owners blossom through proper training, and they interact a lot with boarders.

"Time is spent with each dog while it's here," Ken adds. "We treat our visitors as if they were our own dogs." And, that's the reason staying small is important. The Marks would rather do what they do well to the best of their ability than grow and possibly lose that high-touch interaction.

They encourage others to seek help, information, and support from local community business organizations. They also recommend looking for local classes on business ownership.

"For the future," Ken says, "we'd like to keep our current business track, continue to work on customer service skills, and further enhance our training." 🐾

*Roxanne Hawn is a freelance writer in Golden, Colorado, specializing in animal-related and lifestyle topics. She's a regular contributor to the American Animal Hospital Association's TRENDS magazine and to ABKA's Pet Services Journal.*

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