

MANOR PARK CHRONICLE

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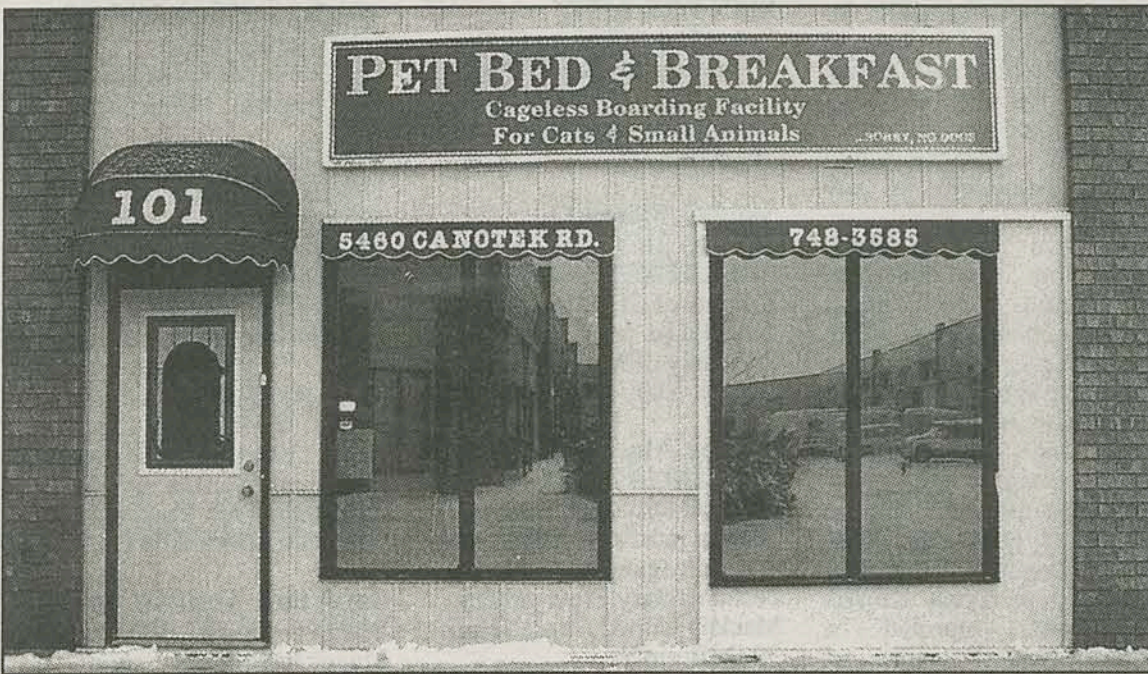


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Pet Bed & Breakfast



By Jane Heintzman

We're all familiar with the concept of a "B & B" but a bed and breakfast for pets? Melanie Walker recently opened a **Pet Bed and Breakfast** in a bright, newly renovated facility in Canotek Park off Shefford Road in Gloucester. **Pet Bed and Breakfast** is an interesting new concept in pet sitting: it is a completely *cageless* boarding facility for cats and small animals such as ferrets and the occasional lizard. While the building is spacious (2000 square feet, with 1000 on each of the two floors), Melanie has worked hard to define the spaces to meet the needs of her various charges and to create a comfortable, homey atmosphere.

The downstairs has been earmarked primarily for outdoor cats and equipped with climbing structures, bunk beds with intriguing tunnels between the beds, walk-up

structures, pillows and of course, stuffed toys. Melanie has defined the space downstairs to include about a dozen separate areas which cats can explore at their leisure and in which they can find a cosy hiding place. There are also six individual units or "rooms" on the main floor for cranky cats who prefer not to socialize, exotic pets or animals with special needs related to diet, exercise or medication. Melanie tailors the contents of these rooms to suit the particular occupant, whether it's a busy ferret or an aging tabby.

The upstairs caters to indoor cats and features a large, comfortably furnished kitchen. For the cats, this is just like home but a *whole* lot more interesting as the cabinets under the kitchen counter are joined with holes through which cats can crawl to find the perfect hiding place. Melanie has even equipped the

cabinets with soft pillows for private napping! Like the main floor, the upstairs is divided into a variety of different areas and includes a play structure area for the cats and plenty of climbing materials. The building also has large windows with generous window ledges to accommodate cats accustomed to curling up in the sun and watching the world go by out of the corner of one half-closed eye.

Pet Bed and Breakfast is staffed throughout the night, often by Melanie herself who sleeps in her own "cat free zone." While the atmosphere in her facility is comfortable and relaxed ("like sending your cat to a friend's house" as Melanie describes it), she is meticulous about inoculations and requires written proof that shots are up to date, as well as a detailed client profile, before accepting an animal. At the moment, she is able to



accommodate about 30 animals ("depending on their personalities!"), but her future plans include the addition of more climbing and "nesting" structures which will increase the capacity of her facility.

Good luck with your new venture, Melanie. I'm sure cats all over Ottawa will be

grateful to you for taking cages out of the boarding experience, and providing so many interesting nooks and crannies to explore!

This article first appeared in the February 2002 issue of the New Edinburgh News.