

Pamper your pets this season

For a totally unique, fun-filled home-away-from-home experience, four-legged guests can visit Gloucester's Pet Bed and Breakfast, says owner and operator Melanie Walker. A cage-free boarding facility that accepts cats and some other small animals, the open atmosphere allows pets to enjoy group socialization, get lots of exercise and feel a sense of security in a space that provides ample places to hide or curl up by themselves, she explains.

Meant to provide a high-stimulation, low-stress environment, the two-storey, 2,000 square foot facility offers group play areas – including structures like airplanes, castles and Ferris wheels for adventurous pets to explore – for both indoor and outdoor cats, as well as individual units for pets with special needs.

Dogs are prohibited because they can prove to be an added stress to other boarding pets, even if kept in separate areas, she says.

Because separation anxiety can be one of the most significant issues that affect animals away from home, the Pet Bed and Breakfast encourages preparing the pet before it even sets paw in the facility.

"Some of these animals are just so attached to their people," Walker explains, adding that severe anxiety can lead to a lack of eating or rest that can cause illness.

Owners who cast a negative or upsetting light on the situation will only make things worse, she adds.

"They're saying, 'I feel so bad, you're not going to be with us for Christmas' ... it's not helpful," Walker says. "(The pets) sense it as something dangerous or final."

Taking time to explain the situation to the pet can be helpful, she continues.

"It's like talking to a young child, the level of understanding," Walker says. "They may not get it 100 per cent, but they will understand it enough."



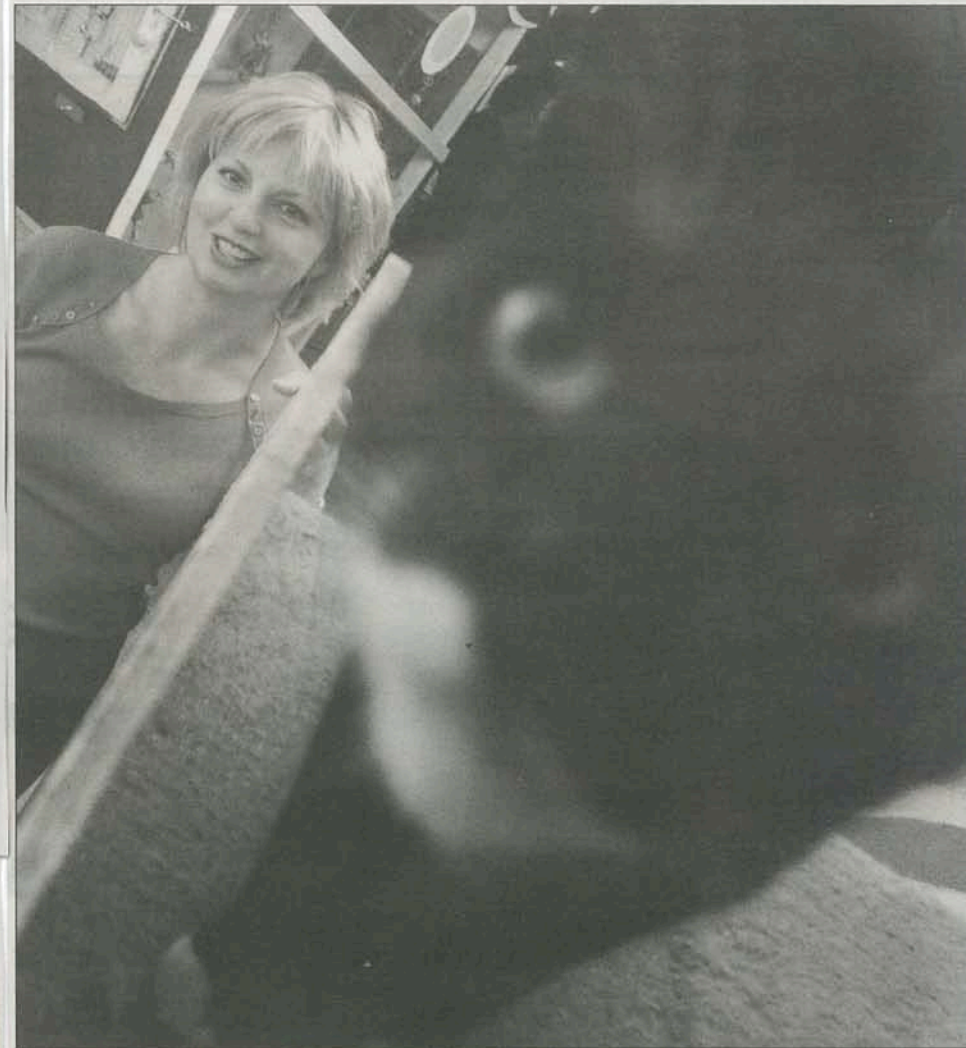
Melanie Walker, owner of the Pet Bed and Breakfast poses with one of her tiny charges in cat paradise. PHOTO BY DARREN BROWN

PAMPERED PETS

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HEALTHY LIFESTYLE
Page 12



Melanie Walker of the Pet Bed and Breakfast offers animals a cage-free environment. PHOTO BY DARREN BROWN

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