

Four Feet Treats

Decking out the dog



Leslie Klipsch
Daffodil sports a yellow bandanna from Four Feet Treats.

BY LESLIE KLIPSCH

Just in time for the dog days of summer, my family has become the besotted owners of a standard poodle puppy. Suddenly, a new world has unfolded before us. Not only have we joined our neighborhood dog-walking circuit and made a few new friends, begun to understand why people say that getting a puppy is like having a baby (I was initially doubtful), and learned to store our shoes up high, but we have also stumbled upon a whole new industry of food and fashion — specifically fit for our four-legged family member.

While we used to stroll the Freight House Farmers' Market for colorful vegetables, freshly baked bread, and savory crepes, our recent visits have included time spent lingering at Four Feet Treats, a one-stop farm stall for dog owners. Jennifer Hall sells beautifully decorated homemade dog treats and colorful pup collars, bandannas, and bow ties that are too cute to simply wander past.

Ms. Hall's business began when she started making treats for her dogs, Ben German James (a 12-year-old black lab) and Donut (a

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9-year-old German shepherd). She, along with her best friend, developed new recipes based on their dogs' individual health needs.

"Donut has severe allergies, which caused skin irritations, so we made treats that are beneficial to his needs," Ms. Hall said. "Eventually we started giving treats to our neighbors and expanding our recipes to include treats that are not only healthy but fun." Soon after, this passion for canine cuisine turned into a business and the pair opened their first bakery in Rock Island. It caught on quickly and at one point Four Feet Treats had 11 wholesale locations within the Q-C area, sold at craft shows, dog events, and the Freight House Farmers' Market. In 2010, they added a second location in SouthPark Mall where it remained until 2011.

Due to a sudden death in her family, Ms. Hall and her business partner closed both locations within two weeks. "I had so much extra responsibility that I could no longer take care of both locations," she recalls. Ms. Hall decided to keep Four Feet Treats in operation, but on a much smaller scale. She currently operates the business from her

home and sells weekly at the Freight House Farmers' Market and occasionally sets up shop at area craft shows.

"Four Feet Treats customers are some of the most genuine people I've ever met," said Ms. Hall. "We have built strong relationships ... they know I have their family member's best interest in mind at all times. Some of my customers have been with me since the beginning."

Ms. Hall said she considers many of her longtime customers family. "We have grown together over the years and I appreciate their loyalty and trust," she said, using adjectives that perfectly describe my new-found hunch: Dogs, and the people who love them, help make the world a kinder place.

Ms. Hall's favorites

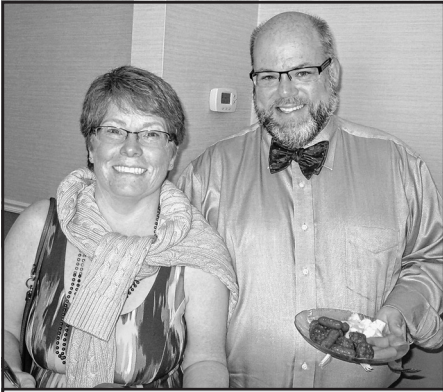
Although she says she enjoys making all of her products, Ms. Hall is especially fond of the dog accessories she sews and sells. "Seeing a pup wear a collar with a matching bow tie is about the cutest thing ever," she said. "It gives the dog a whole new persona." Example: one customer purchases bow ties for her dog Wendell because he accompanies

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and auction at the Steeplegate Inn in Davenport on May 31.



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his owner to do accounting work during the week.

My favorites

Standing next to Ms. Hall's set-up on a Saturday morning, it quickly becomes clear that Four Feet Treats is well loved by many. Regular customers know just what their pups want and after a bit of chitchat, happy dog owners walk away with leash, and treat, in hand. Though our 12-week-old poodle is too young for "Mini Peanut Paws" or Ms. Hall's intricately decorated dog treats, it's impossible to resist a bright yellow collar and matching bandanna for our little Daffodil. Always an admirer of the handmade and local, I am thrilled with the prospect of decking out our dog with accouterments from a maker who lives and works in the Quad-Cities.

The details

Four Feet Treats can be found at the Freight House Farmers' Market every Saturday and Sunday (weather permitting) or by contacting Ms. Hall through Facebook at "Four Feet Treats RI."

Each month in The Gold Standard, Leslie Klipsch, a freelance writer and editor based in Davenport, shines a spotlight on the gems of the Quad-Cities area — for Gold Book readers. She enjoys reading, cooking, spending time with her husband and three young children and exploring all that the Quad-Cities has to offer.

Read more of Leslie at leslieklipsch.com.

