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Inside {local } June 23

6 LIVING THE RV LIFE

Many Foley residents live full time in an RV, learn how they do it

SPA FOR PETS

16

Local business pampers pets and makes them feel right at home

LOCAL FOCUS BUSINESS DIRECTORY 11 FAITH & WORSHIP PAGE 12, 13

ON THE COVER: Many local residents have given up their traditional lifestyle, trading it for full time RV living. If feeling like being on vacation fulltime, downsizing, and traveling with your home sounds good, see page 6 to learn more about this lifestyle. Photo by Linda Williford.

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David Williford, Foley Local General Manager, at 615-243-3031, or email David at dwilliford@wilcolocal.com.





IS THE RV LIFESTYLE CALLING?

BY LINDA WILLIFORD

RV parks and resorts are flourishing in Baldwin County, including the Foley and Gulf Shores areas. There are numerous RV parks and resort locations for summer vacationers, snowbirds, and even full-time residents. According to a recent study from the RV Industry Association, RV ownership is at a record high of 11.2 million households, half of which are ages 55 and over. Studies have shown there are health benefits for all ages associated with the natural habitat of the great outdoors.

Joanna and Doug from Iowa started their camping adventures by vacationing in an RV travel trailer. They discovered it was fun. As they decided to travel across the United States, they began searching for their future retirement home. Joanna said, "When we got to Foley, Alabama, we fell in love with the area." They have a 21 ft. rig and are currently settled on a rented lot in an RV park. Joanna says, "What we love about RV living is that you find yourself in a community of the most wonderful people."

Economically, the difference between RV living and living in a traditional home is that the expenses will be about half that of a conventional home. But one should consider the limited space and compact living in an RV home. "Close quarters could take a little time getting use to," says Joanna. But there are larger options available that Joanna and Doug are considering. Mel and Lea Ann, from Indiana, have retired in their 38 ft. 5th wheel RV. They have purchased a lot in a local RV park resort. Mel

loves the idea that they are only 5 miles from the beach. Mel says, "Now that our home is on wheels, if a hurricane comes, we can pack up and head north." Lea Ann added, "That's the beauty of living in an RV. We can travel at a moment's notice or plan the trip

PAGE 8 >

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< FROM PAGE 6

of a lifetime. We have a condo on wheels."

Not everyone living the RV lifestyle is a vacationer or retiree. Kathryn and Josh have a different story. The traditional house they were renting was quickly sold, and they had to find a place to live immediately. Out of necessity, they purchased a 43 ft. 5th wheel RV and currently are living on family property. Kathryn says, "Be sure you have enough space. We are a family of four plus a dog. My husband and I have custom-built more shelves and created an extra bedroom. Don't be afraid to be creative with your space." This is a temporary home for Kathryn and Josh until they can purchase property and build their dream barndominium.

RV living does appeal to many couples with children. The family can enjoy life as they travel all year long. They can work remotely, homeschool, and make a lifetime of memories with their children simultaneously.

With the growing number of RV owners, there is also an increasing need for repair and maintenance services. Chris, the owner of Petersen RV Service in Foley, says that with the temperatures and humidity as it is in this area, the most common issue

for service is the air conditioning. His business does RV repairs and routine maintenance but not structural repairs. Petersen says, "Regular maintenance is the key to the longevity of your RV." His business also has a mobile service that will come out to the local parks.

There are training opportunities for those who are interested in the RV industry. For example, the RV Women's Alliance Tech School is keeping up with the growing demand for RV technicians. Their mission is to elevate, educate, and promote women in the RV industry.

The RV lifestyle appeals to all ages, even those who are disabled. There is a handicapped travel club that encourages people with disabilities to join the RV crowd. Go to www.handi-cappedtravelclub.com.

The RV lifestyle may not be for everyone. But you can always give it a try by renting an RV and taking a trip. Many people are exploring the countryside and loving it. Many are downsizing to an RV home and finding their place that brings them relaxation and stress-free living. Either way, RVing gives an opportunity to enjoy the natural habitat of the great outdoors.

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He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God? (6:8)

There is no doubt that our world is full of complex problems that seem intractable and overwhelming, often defying easy explanation or solution. But, however daunting the situation, these simple words stand at the very heart of everything we say and do as disciples of the one who came to us as the Prince of Peace. We invite you to join with us as we, however imperfectly, seek to live out Micah's words in covenant community.

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Photo by Linda Williford

THE SPA EXPERIENCE FOR PETS

BY JASON ZASKY

When Dr. Ron Hayles sold his veterinary practice in Birmingham and moved to Foley full-time more than 20 years ago, he didn't plan on "trading one seven-day-a-week job for another," as he puts it. Then he noticed there were few local options for boarding dogs, not to mention cats, birds, and other pets.

"There were a couple small kennels and a veterinary hospital or two that boarded dogs. So, I thought it would be a good opportunity to start a new business without going back into full-time practice," he says. Dr. Hayles settled on the concept of creating a "pet resort," well before that term became a part of the vernacular.

He went on to build a 7,200-square-foot facility that opened in 2004, one that features 75 kennel rooms and four outdoor exercise yards where dogs can run and play.

"We board dogs short & long term, and we do daycare and groom & bathe," explains Dr. Hayles, before noting that the facility also features private suites that include televisions and furniture. However, pet guests don't necessarily need to stay in their rooms.

"A guest that stays here gets to mingle, if he or she is a good

citizen," he says. "They get to go outside and run and play and do their business and make friends. We keep pets long- or short-term, whatever the client wants," adds Dr. Hayles, who says Coastal Pet Resort also accepts cats, birds, and even some exotic animals."

"We've got a couple clients that have pot-bellied pigs and a handful who have rabbits. We have people bring in parrots, and we've even had monkeys once in a while. I had a lady bring a clutch of squirrels one time," recalls Dr. Hayles, who says the overwhelming majority of Coastal Pet Resort's business is canine, handled by five full-time employees, one part-timer, and a contract groomer who works Monday-Friday.

Naturally, Dr. Hayles looks to hire people who love animals and have previous experience caring for pets. "The first thing we ask them is if they have dogs," he says, "and the people we hire typically have experience at an animal hospital, kennel, or pet store."

The staff are also trained to cater to each individual client's needs.

"We try to be as client- and pet-friendly as can be," he adds, noting that Coastal Pet Resort allows owners to bring beds, AUDIOLOGY & HEARING SOLUTIONS

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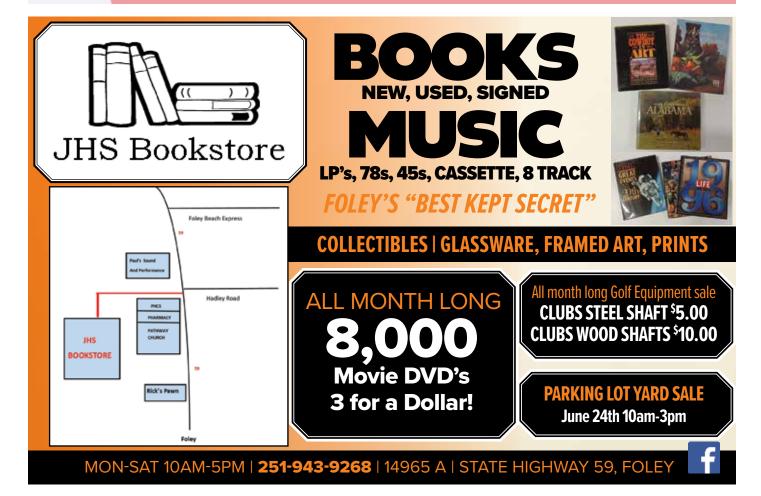
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< FROM PAGE 16

blankies, toys, and treats with them if they so desire. They also bring food for their pet, "so we don't cause digestive problems," he relates.

"A lot of that food is specially prepared, and a lot of the dogs that we board are on medication. Even though we are not a veterinary hospital, I have trained all my staff to administer pills and give insulin shots. So, we do give them their meds while they are here," confirms Dr. Hayles, who says that the typical client leaves their pet for long weekends or for a week at a time, though on occasion, a pet will stay for a month or two. Business also tends to be brisk during severe weather.

"If residents have to evacuate, we end up taking care of their pets," he says, as his facility is engineered to withstand a category 5 hurricane.

Dr. Hayles says he expects his business to continue to expand, in part because of the growth of Foley and Baldwin County, and in part because of the growth of the pet industry.

"People will do just about anything for their pets," he says. "They will spend money, not only on the veterinary part of it but also feeding them quality diets and boarding them in good places."

That helps explain why Coastal Pet Resort has so many regular clients.

"We have a lot of repeat business, and we get a lot of good reviews," continues Dr. Hayles, who says his clients also appreciate the flexibility that Coastal Pet Resort offers.

"We charge by the night, so we are not real particular about when owners pick up their pets and when they drop them off," adds the second-generation veterinarian, who loves living and working in Foley as much as ever.

"I had a condo here for years before I moved down here, but back then Foley was a lot sleepier. In the last 20 years, it has really matured and gotten bigger," he says. The same is true for Coastal Pet Resort, which remains his focus 24/7/365 as the business approaches its 20th anniversary.

"When you've got people's precious pets in your care, you can't just walk away from it. We operate 365 days a year," he concludes, and "we stay pretty doggone busy."

CONTACT:

Coastal Pet Resort is located at 20106 Richard Childress Lane, Foley, AL 36535; see their ad on page 11 for more information.

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