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Shelly Gilliam:

Leader of the Pack

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Contributors

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Monica Kaplan, a Prescott resident since 1984, graduated from Northern Arizona University with a bachelor's degree in journalism. She has written for several newspapers as well as been a radio news reporter. She and her husband Brad have two children, Rachel and Trevor.



Sandy Moss is an adopted Prescottian who seldom needs an introduction. After years of writing for The Daily Courier and numerous awards, her words have a familiar sound. She presently lights up the air waves over KPPV 106.7 FM and KQNA 1130 AM radio. While she admits that the change brings new challenges and enjoyment, it can now be said that she is a writer who broadcasts, and a broadcaster who writes.



Karlyn Haas is the grants officer for Yavapai College and a local freelance writer. She earned her master's degree in journalism from Michigan State University and has had her educational and environmental writing published nationally. In her free time she enjoys traveling with her husband, walking her dog on local trails and cycling with the "Janimals" at the Prescott Racquet Club.



Hilary Dartt moved to Prescott from Santa Cruz, California in 2003 to work as a reporter for the Daily Courier. She and her husband Victor welcomed their son Logan in October and since then she has stayed home to take care of Logan and to pursue her freelance writing career.



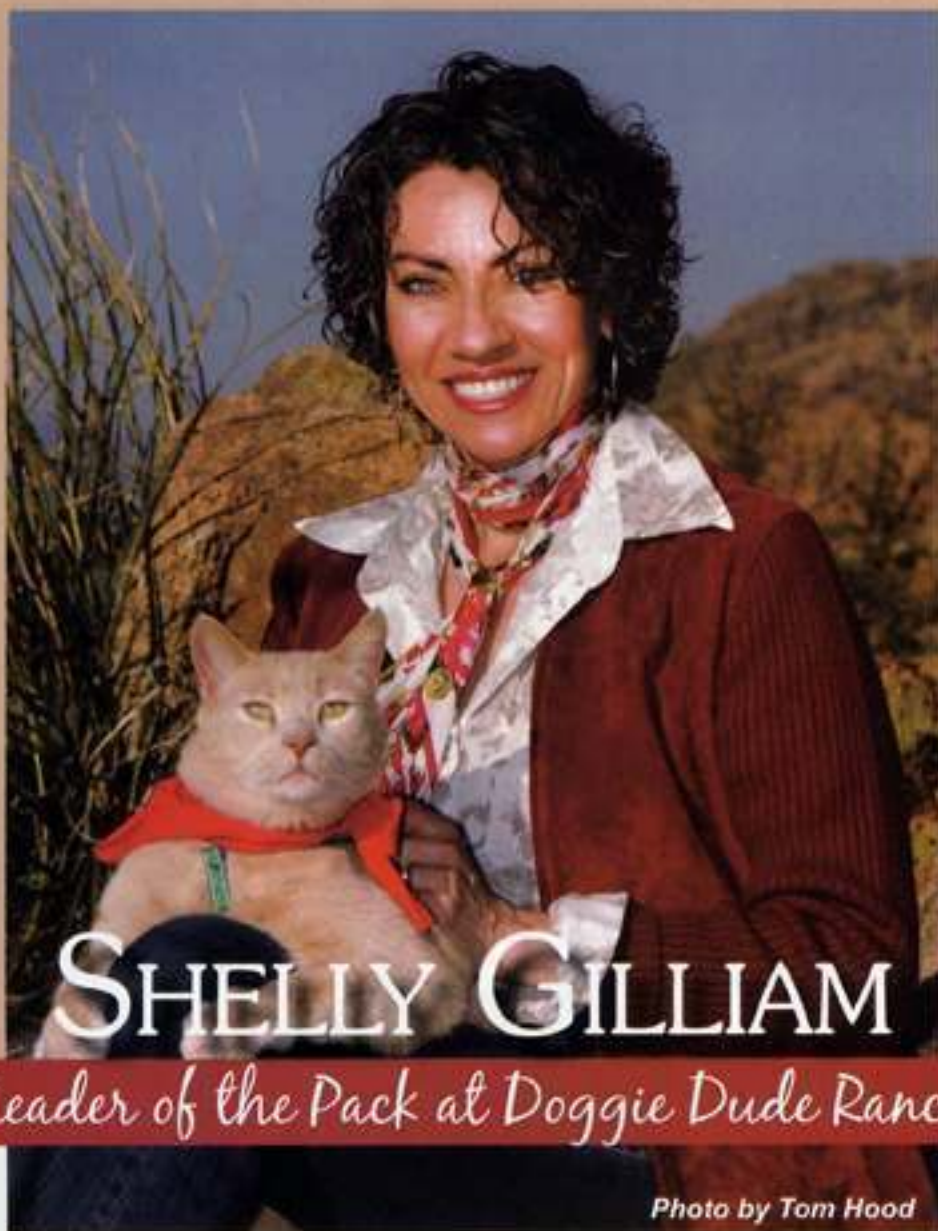
Elisabeth Ruffner is a historian and writer whose lifelong activities as a volunteer and businesswoman have seen her engaged in library, historic preservation and open space concerns locally, state- and nation-wide. A recipient of many honors and awards, she has most recently been named a Culture Keeper in preparation of the 100th anniversary of Arizona statehood in 2012, as well as a History Maker by the Arizona Historical Society, Phoenix Chapter.



Erica Ryberg is a Prescott native who decided to put her biology degree to use five years ago by pursuing a freelance writing career. Since then, she's focused on writing feature stories on social issues and conservation, and her byline has appeared in High Country News and Smithsonian.com. She lives in a little stone cottage near downtown Prescott where she drinks a lot of tea, and caters to her two spoiled cats.



Karen Despain, a native Arizonan, has been a Prescott resident since 1989. A graduate of the University of Arizona, she retired in 2005 from a long career at The Daily Courier. Today, she enjoys freelance writing and serves on the boards of Prescott Area Habitat for Humanity, the Arizona's Children Association and is chair of the Yavapai County Juvenile Court Center Community Advisory Board. Her daughter Debi and light-of-her-life granddaughter, Payten, live in Phoenix.



SHELLY GILLIAM

Leader of the Pack at Doggie Dude Ranch

Photo by Tom Hood

By Erica Ryberg

In a day of organized chaos at the Doggie Dude Ranch, a girl with pink hair led a pair of freshly-washed Golden Doodles (think retriever plus poodle) across the DDR's Spanish tiles. Two more teens, sporting Northpoint Academy shirts, collected cash. Owner Shelly Gilliam, standing in the middle of the action, flashed a victory sign. She'd trained the students well enough that they were doing a great job without her.

"I'm superfluous!" she said.

It was the second of two Dog Wash

Fundraisers put on by Northpoint Expeditionary Learning Academy students. Prior to the event, Gilliam put the teens through several weeks of intensive training on grooming, interacting with the public and marketing. The results spoke for themselves.

The way Shelly described it, the victory went beyond teaching a gaggle of teens to be handy with clippers. It was an investment in their future success.

"I told them 'You go! You put your heart into it and you did it,'" she said. "When they learn that they can do something that difficult and have success, they can take that win and apply

that to other areas of their lives."

Shelly takes a visceral delight in helping the people around her achieve independence and competence. And she wears that delight on her sleeve. She talks quickly, laughs a lot and uses gestures to underscore every point she makes. She is a woman in constant motion and has a mind that's constantly at work. Stacks of library books in her living room attest to this. The titles range from canine and feline behavior books, to a hypnotic marketing book, to Greg Mortenson's "Three Cups of Tea."

"She loves learning and new ex-

periences," said Shelly's husband, Dan. "And she doesn't just want to learn - she wants to master whatever she's exposed to."

Shelly's a teacher, a dog pack leader, and ultimately a catalyst for personal growth. As a result, her students, team members, and even the

DDR's canine campers can't cross her path without learning to be a little lighter on their feet.

It was a lesson she learned from her mother and began passing to her own daughter at an early age.

"From the earliest age, my mother taught us that if the whole family isn't working, then the family isn't working," said Shelly.

And so, even at five-years-old, MLynn, Dan and Shelly's only child, was also working—cleaning dog and cat runs, the smallest member of a tightly-knit working family.

The DDR has been a family operation since Dan's parents, Cherie & Clifford Gilliam, founded it 25 years ago. In 1994, when he was ready to retire, Shelly and Dan moved from Tucson to Prescott to operate the business. Eventually, they made the leap and bought the business. It's been growing successfully ever since.

Eight years ago when they hired Jenny Huddleston and Bob Johnson, the Gilliams still maintained a seam-



Courtesy Photo

Clowning around (from left): Shelly Gilliam, JoAnne Livernois, Jenny Huddleston

Helping dogs and cats to feel happy and comfortable away from home requires plenty of continuing education and also a light, intuitive touch.

lessness between business and family. Both Bob and Jenny are still with the DDR. Ask Jenny why she's never left, and she'll tell you she feels like family.

"I've watched their business grow and I feel like I've been a part of that," Jenny said.

The Gilliams agree.

"Jen and Bob are as much the DDR as we are—for years they have cared for us, our clients and all the pets in our care," Dan said.

A few years later, Dan started to need more help at the executive level. Meanwhile, Shelly had left her career

as a hairdresser to pursue academics. In 2005, after graduating from NAU, she joined her husband at the helm. Using the same passion and drive that helped her graduate summa cum laude, and with Dan's help, she started guiding the direction of the business.

The challenge, noted Shelly, was

continuing to grow the family business in a deliberate manner. A piece of that was expanding on the DDR experience, one that dogs can't wait to have. One need only watch Hank, a cantankerous and fussy border collie, leap the front porch in a single bound and stand waiting at the door that leads to the play park and runs. It's a scene that repeats itself many times each day. The secret? The staff speaks fluent dog and cat, and spends time socializing each and every guest. Pooches get more than just a place to stay - they also learn to play well with others and to interact with new humans in an enjoyable and educational manner.

Helping dogs and cats to feel happy and comfortable away from home requires plenty of continuing education and also a light, intuitive touch. But Shelly says it's a worthy investment of time and energy.

"It's one thing to board a dog for a night and a whole other thing to invest in socializing a dog for long term re-



Keeping it all in the family: M'Lynn, 16; Dan and Shelly Gilliam

"I want to make sure that the dogs leave knowing how to play well with others so they go out and make the world a better place. It's about ripples."

- Shelly Gilliam

sults," she said. "I want to make sure that the dogs leave knowing how to play well with others so they go out and make the world a better place. It's about ripples."

The idea making the world a better place one visit at a time was novel to Dan.

"How do you save the world being around a bunch of barking dogs?" he asked. "But you really can make the world better, according to Shelly. She's certainly got me on board."

The ripples continued spreading

and in 2007, Shelly and Dan realized that the Doggie Dude Ranch needed to make a quantum leap. They applied for entry to APS's Academy for the Advancement of Small, Minority and Women Owned Enterprises (AAAME), a two-year crash course in business coaching and best practices.

According to AAAME director Rena Huber, the Gilliams' signature readiness to learn and grow made them phenomenal candidates for the program.

"They've grown not only in the tra-

ditional business sense but also in the expansiveness of thinking," she said.

On a recent evening, Shelly answers the door, her curls still wet from a shower. She says she's still recovering from her afternoon run, but even in recovery mode, she's a ball of energy. She sees me looking at an Anthony Robbins CD set.

"Tony goes running with me every day," she said.

Because, of course, in Shelly's world, running is another opportunity to keep learning and growing. I ask her if



Top: M'Lynn Gilliam, surrounded with fur
Bottom: Michael Ziminsky, Kennel tech and groomer

she has any other heroes besides Tony.

"Ken Lain at Watters Garden Center," she said, without missing a beat. "The guy is a marketing genius. I look at what Ken does and I think 'How do I get there?'"

Pulling a page from dog-speak, she continued.

"[Ken] just knows how to play, to be out in the community. And I think that part of the way he finds that energy to be out there is he's not bogged down with doing it all himself. He's built his team and he trusts them. That's a complete 'Aha!' moment for me."

(Continued on page 40)

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