



Then

Prior to 2005, the closest **LISA MORETTI** had gotten to being in the “pet” industry was performing a “bulldog” move on her opponent in the ring of *World Wrestling Entertainment!* LISA, aka *IVORY*, the award winning female wrestler, performed this facebuster take-down with such stealth and strength that the move was dubbed the *POISON IVORY*. So how does a 5’ 5” hard body, mylar-clad brunette and pay-for-view star with a reputation for some serious rump kicking end-up as a force to be reckoned within the pet care industry?



Now!

In July of 2005 Lisa found she had some time on her hands after the restructuring of her *WWE* contract and subsequent cancellation of the television program she would be hosting. As she contemplated her next career, who could have known that a tragedy of monumental proportions by the name of *Katrina*, would provide Lisa with the opportunities to play her next great role? Together with her niece, Lisa vowed to care for the four-legged victims of *Katrina*. This big hearted act of kindness and compassion landed the two ladies in Tylertown, Mississippi assisting *Best Friends Animal Society*, a no-kill sanctuary in Kanab, Utah.

A second volunteer run with *Best Friends* was in Kanab, Utah at their sanctuary where she took care of 150 cats and dogs from Beirut, Lebanon. Lisa was immediately impressed by how the volunteers worked together and how the sanctuary’s motto of leading a *kindness revolution* was being lived out. “The things we saw there were miraculous and impressive,” exclaims Lisa.

Once home on San Juan Island, in Washington, Lisa began volunteering for the local humane society where she met Jessica Ray, a member of the shelter’s board of directors, and expert dog trainer. Jessica and Lisa soon discovered a shared dream of having their own no-kill animal sanctuary.

The two ladies quickly realized they brought opposite but equal strengths to their vision as they talked about numerous business possibilities. Jess was well established among the canine community on the island. Lisa, with her strong sense of marketing and use of media, seemed like a match made in doggie heaven! The journey to *Downtown Dog* had begun.

*Downtown Dog* opened in 2007, is a daycare, training, grooming and cat boarding facility located in Friday Harbor on San Juan Island, Washington. The company’s vision, passion and inspiration is

# The Power of the Paw

By Marsha Lohr

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Lisa, aka Ivory



based on Lisa and Jess's experience in sanctuary and shelter work. They showcase their lessons learned from Caesar Milan's positive role model in dog training.

Even though Lisa is not looking for fame and fortune in this new career, it will surely find her. How can she avoid the inevitable with her winning approach to life?

"Do something that you like to do and go for it with all you have! That's how I do everything," Lisa states with passion. So it is not surprising that the mantra both practiced and preached by Lisa and Jess for their business is the "Power of the Paw." Everyone-in and everything-about *Downtown Dog* must meet up to the highest level of standard in safety and cleanliness.

In June of 2007, Lisa and Jess found a great opportunity to expand location and services of *Downtown Dog* when a retiring veterinarian was seeking tenants for his former clinic in a two story house on an acre of land. This was the chance to grow the business that Lisa and Jess had been seeking. Today they have their own on-call vet who teaches them about recognizing potential health problems and routine care of skin, ears, and related health areas. With the veterinarian's assistance, *Downtown Dog* may even have a low cost vet vaccine program.

With both owners having tons of energy, there is no shortage of creativity. With a new idea, based on Caesar Milan's positive techniques with animal interaction, the business expanded their trademark. Jess envisioned a *Doggie Day-care Bus* for canine outings and soon had a

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way to make her dream a reality. The *San Juan Island Transit* had a fleet of busses they didn't use anymore. They were selling a 24-foot bus for \$300. Ta-da – the *Bow Wow Bus* was born!

In keeping with their *Power of the Paw* mantra, two people would be on board *The Bow Wow Bus*, a driver and lifeguard, and up to 15 canine clients. All lifeguards are professional dog trainers. If one Terrier is on board, they limit the canine group to 12 or 13. With a great group of dogs they can handle up to 20. *The Bow Wow Bus* cruises through main streets,

the yard exploring new scents of each zone. Of course owners who don't have any qualms with their dogs socializing must sign releases to allow their dogs to participate in zone play.

As Lisa learned starring in *Tuff Enough*, the MTV reality show, "Everyone thinks they can wrestle if you make it look easy enough." That's how Lisa and Jess feel about doing their dog business.

"Some people make it look easy but it's not," Lisa states. Both women understand that the biggest challenge is to find new people that love animals and are willing to work very hard. They must live up to the *Power of the Paw* mantra so they can expand and carry on the business after Lisa and Jess can't do it anymore.

*Downtown Dog* operates six days a week offering grooming services on the days *The Bow Wow Bus* stays parked. When Lisa first started grooming, she admits it was a bit more difficult than she expected, but she did have some experience in a similar field. She was a former makeup artist for *Revlon* before wrestling, and admits to being a fast study.

With her artistic side, she uses her shears as tools of art. She has been grooming for a year and has picked it up just hands-on. She admits Cocker Spaniels are her challenge. But she has taken classes to educate herself on new skills in the grooming world and she encourages her staff to take classes as well.

Her favorite type of dog to groom is one who is "a disgusting mess, feeling like crap, and looking like crap," says Lisa. It's most gratifying when you have a

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Lisa at Downtown Dog

blowing its horn of up to twenty different animal's sounds. Anywhere that Lisa and Jess stop for errands, people run up to the bus and take pictures. "It's a mobile petting zoo of dogs," jokes Lisa.

All dogs are buckled into their seats to keep the dogs safe. Seat belts can act as long leashes. When they get to their locations with fabulous bird's eye views of beautiful landscapes, everyone plays ball off leash. *The Bow Wow Bus* runs in all weather, making two runs a day, three days a week. Both Lisa and Jess believe that to be a *Bow Wow Bus* worker is the highest honor and most rewarding experience of being a part of *Downtown Dog*.

"You get hands on experience in the growth of a dog's personality," Lisa states with pride.

In addition to the bus, *Downtown Dog* runs four play and exercise zones on their acre of land so all dogs can rotate around



Jess and The Bow Wow Bus



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challenge and can work with them to be clean, silky, and alleviate their pain and discomfort.” Whichever breed that is, her forte is making sure the dog leaves with a great butt. “All dogs need to have a nice clean rump,” she insists.

Since Lisa is the *Cat Whisperer* of *Downtown Dog* and has always been a cat lover, she needed to make sure there was a place for her first loves. “I can groom any cat you put in my lap,” Lisa admits. She even takes on the task of bathing the cats. “I always bathe them before their haircut because it relaxes them,” she advises. Cat boarding in the facility has a room with colony settings, or kennels if needed, for the cats to stay in.

Lisa says the expansion of the *Downtown Dog* brand is a constant goal. They have a cute boutique area and are exploring products to expand the retail aspect of *Downtown Dog*. They would also like to have a Zen Meditation Den in the downstairs area of the building. Lisa and Jess are constantly going back to their business plan and reaffirming what they have to do to meet their goals. None being more important than the no-kill sanctuary they plan to have on their property one day where pets will be adopted into loving homes and a chance for a happy family life.

Both ladies understand the importance of pet owner education and part of the sanctuary and adoption programs would include leadership training. “I would love for people to work with dogs to develop positive leadership skills, teach about partnership, parenting and trust issues, using dogs as role models,” Lisa says.

Lisa Moretti, with all of her crowning achievements, may have finally found her arena of choice... an arena where a “bull-dog” and a “guillotine” are used in a nail clipping session rather than a hammerlock and a face-first meeting with the mat.

No doubt Lisa, aka *Ivory*, has already made an imprint on the pet care industry and will continue to do so as she drives the *Bow Wow Bus* to successful destinations only dreamed of by her four-legged clients!

Keep your eye on this entrepreneur. If she’s driving, get on the bus or get out of the way! There is no stopping Lisa Moretti. ✨