

M Fredonia woman hopes business will cash in on pooch Poo

By MARK JAEGER

Ozaukee Press Company staff

The slogan for Pile Patrol succinctly explains the work of Fredonia's newest enterprise: "Dirty deeds done dirt cheap."

Looking for her niche in the burgeoning world of service businesses, 35-year-old Gretchen Gibb has chosen to make money from one of life's more distasteful tasks

—cleaning up after Fido.

Although countless colorful and off color descriptions for her business come to mind, Gibb describes her venture as a dog waste removal service.

Popular in many urban communities around the country, Gibb said Pile Patrol is the only service of its kind in Waukeez County.

For a base rate of \$7, Gibb will make weekly visits to a home and pick up the fecal matter left in the yard. The charge increases \$3 for each additional dog.

For more prolific dogs, twice a week visits can also be arranged.

After a yard is cleaned, Gibb leaves a curd saying "Your yard is doggie duty free."

Collected waste is double bagged and removed from the site.

"It is a complete service," she said.

So far, Gibb has been disposing of the hags along with her household garbage—and the waste of her own family dogs, a St. Bernard named Mercedes and a golden retriever named Brandy.

If the service flourishes, Gibb said, she may have to look into securing a storage facility in the country for the accumulated doo-doo.

business for just three weeks, Gibb has only a handful of clients, but she has developed a business plan which calls for 30 to 50 clients in the first year. She is hoping to double that number in successive years.

When she has 150 customers, Gibb said she will look into hiring additional help.

That workforce is not likely to come from her four children, whom Gibb said she used to pay pretty well to pick up after her own dogs.

"My husband Mark would still run over the stuff with the lawnmower," she said.

To make a business like Pile Patrol work, you need a sense of humor and Gibb has no short supply of that.

Her business card features the somewhat-less-than-grandiose job title as "poop scoop's lady."

Gibb originally planned to use the description as the name of the business, but reconsidered.

"I couldn't see people in Ozaukee County writing out a check to Poop Scoop's Lady," she said.

She is getting the name Pile Patrol trademarked.

Gibb announced the launch of her business this week, which is National Dog Week.

A promotional flyer offers some light-hearted suggestions on how a homeowner can tell they would benefit from the services of Pile Patrol.

Among the telltale signs, "You go outside to enjoy the fresh air and you need a clothespin for your nose" or "Your dog is running out of green grassy areas to go."

Even her telephone number evokes a smile: (414) 6K9-POOP.

Pet poop removal has spawned thriving enterprises across the country. An industry Web site — www.pooper-scooper.com —notes one Colorado service which cleans more than 2,000 yards a week.

"That would be wonderful," Gibb said.

Long driven by an entrepreneurial spirit, Gibb has operated a child-care business,



GRETCHEN GIBB HAS turned a love of animals into a new waste removal business, Pile Patrol. Gibb is shown in her Village of Fredonia yard with the family golden retriever, Brandy.

Photo by Mark Jaeger

sold real estate and Mary Kay products and worked as a mortgage broker.

"The problem is the market is so saturated with those services. I wanted to do something different," Gibb said.

When she posed the idea of her business to her husband, the reaction was predictable.

"At first he asked if I was insane. Then he said, 'When you tell the kids, make sure you don't take any crap from them,'" Gibb said.

Not everyone laughed at Gibb's new business.

Her teenage sons Joshua and Joel were immediately concerned about what they should tell their friends.

"They had some issues with it," Gibb said. "I said they should tell their friends their mom is a canine fecal removal specialist."

Jokes aside, Gibb said she takes a certain amount of pride in the service. Her target market is the elderly and disabled, as well as busy pet owners and those with low gagtolerances.

"I have a client is Grafton who has four See Doo-doo on Paw 17A

Doo-doo: Business is picking up

FROM PAGE 15A

dogs, and she just gets sick when she has to pick up their poop," Gibb said.

"It is honest work. You can't get much more honest than this."

An animal lover, Gibb said collecting dog piles usually doesn't bother her.

"Sometimes, it can be a little disgusting. If the piles seem unusually runny or whatever, it may mean something is wrong with the dog and I will tell the owner," she said.

Waste removal businesses elsewhere have branched out to cleaning kitty litter boxes, but Gibb said she isn't sure she wants to go in that direction.

Collecting waste is done with a pole-mounted dust bin, similar to those used in hotel lobbies

"It's faster than the scissor-style scoops," Gibb said.

She said the equipment and the bottom

of her shoes must be disinfected after each visit to avoid spreading diseases.

When business picks up, Gibb said she plans to haul equipment and supplies in trailer painted to look like a doghouse.