

In good hands

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An engineer by training, Zoe Gan never looked back after she's decided to move into an entirely new field of pet care – where her true passion is. In 2004, she founded a service called Pawsitive Sensations in California, that offers professional massage therapy for pets. PETS spoke with Zoe Gan, the founder, when she was in Singapore recently.

WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO GO INTO THE PET INDUSTRY?

I was working in the engineering industry as a Project Engineer and a Product Development Manager. After a few years, I realised I did not enjoy it. So I wanted to do something that I would enjoy and animals always bring a smile to my face. As life would have it, I was in the US with my husband and some friends gave me the idea to look into dog massage therapy as opposed to enrolling for a veterinary course. The rest is history.

YOU ARE BASED IN CALIFORNIA. HOW DIFFERENT IS THE PET INDUSTRY THERE AS COMPARED TO SINGAPORE?

Total opposites. The pet industry is very developed there and there's a myriad of services available. The pet owners and vets are also better informed about alternative healthcare for pets. When I started Pawsitive Sensations in Singapore, I found that public education on alternative pet care is something I had to work hard at as many people did not believe that massage therapy and post-surgery physiotherapy for dogs were necessary or beneficial.

WHAT KIND OF QUALIFICATIONS DO YOU NEED TO BE A PET MASSAGE THERAPIST?

There is no official requirement in Singapore, but in certain parts of the US, you need to get certification from approved schools. There may also be a state level certification exam and required Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for business insurance.

WHAT MAKES PET MASSAGE SO EFFECTIVE?

Professional canine massage therapy involves disciplined and pressured strokes placed with intention on specific areas of the dog's physiology. Special massage strokes and techniques are then applied to the problem areas to aid the dog in self-healing. Through the skilled touch of a professional massage practitioner, massage is an excellent complementary therapy to veterinarian care.

Therapeutic massage for senior dogs maintains and mildly stimulates circulation of blood and lymph as well as increases flexibility. Pain is relieved naturally (no drugs), which is especially good for dogs in constant pain or have a chronic illness. It also aids to speed up the healing process post-surgery.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS? DO YOU PLAN TO EXPAND PAWSITIVE SENSATIONS?

We are slowly expanding the number of therapists and have recently started training our third apprentice. There are also plans to work towards custom packaging our holistic services together.

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON QUESTIONS THAT CUSTOMERS ASK ABOUT YOUR SERVICES?

Many new customers tend to ask us how many sessions will it take for the dog to recover from surgery. This depends on the type of surgery, the severity of the injury or problem, the age of the dog, the character of the dog and most

importantly, the dedication of the owners in taking care of the dog in between the massage sessions.

DO YOU HAVE ANY PETS? TELL US ABOUT YOUR PETS.

I have a handsome Pembroke Corgi named Benhur. My husband and I bring him along on many of our road trips. He's a funny and friendly dog who constantly makes me laugh; I cannot imagine my life without him. He is also Pawsitive Sensations' mascot (his face is on the mobile van) and is also the PR manager (meet and greet!).

WHO IS YOUR INSPIRATION?

My husband Clement and his Silky Terrier Terri. They touched my heart the first time I met them and saw the bond and love they shared. Her passing made me think about vet services here and other treatments that could be possible for animals. That prompted me to search for new therapies.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT THIS INDUSTRY?

Our patients are what I like most about my job. When the dogs realise that we are there to help them heal they reciprocate with love and happiness whenever we go for the house calls. Dogs make great patients as they plainly and generously show their appreciation.

WIN! We are giving away 20% discount for single 30min session of Canine Relaxation Massage (U.P. \$25) courtesy of Pawsitive Sensations. To participate, visit www.petsmagazine.com.sg/annipromo.