

Pets are big business



■ ROXANNE PETTIPAS created the "Buddy Belt" for her dog. Her growing business is part of the \$3 billion pet industry in Canada.

Plenty of money being spent on cats and dogs, says creator of the "Buddy Belt"

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PEOPLE LOVE their pets — and they'll spare no expense on them. "My dog is my child and I want the best for him," entrepreneur Roxanne Pettipas says.

Pettipas owns a company called Class Art Productions Inc., makers of a unique dog harness called the Buddy Belt (www.buddybelts.com). It hugs a dog around its armpits, offering dog owners a safe, comfortable and humane alternative to neck leashes and other harnesses currently on the market.

"I designed a special harness for

my dog, Buddy, and it quickly became a popular product," she says.

Now in its third year, her company started out as a home-based business, it now manufactures the leather product at a factory. After machine cutting, each harness is hand-crafted to ensure a comfortable fit for any body type of dog.

While she was originally motivated to improve the quality of life for her own pet, Pettipas soon realized she was on to something big. "The timing was great for such a product.

In Canada, the pet industry is worth \$3 billion annually and in the United States it's worth \$34 billion annually," she says.

Buying everything from gourmet treats to walking services to insurance, pet owners show no signs of slowing down their spending on cats and dogs. In fact, the industry is projected to grow at a rate of 6% each year.

Pettipas' biggest challenge now is keeping up with the demands of her growing business. "There's a lot of work to do and it can be overwhelming at times. I've always thought of myself as a very organized person but the demands of entrepreneurship have pushed this concept into a new realm," she says.

Small businesses that survive the first few chaotic years will usually stabilize and achieve success, providing the owner sets clear goals, establishes a vision and remains positive.

"Keep your eye on the ball by staying focused," Pettipas says. "Believe that step-by-step and inch-by-inch, you will get to where you are going."

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