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# Are you Barking Mad...?

By Claire Metcalfe

A SUCCESSFUL dog-sitting business in Ryedale is looking for new recruits.

Janet Locke from Pickering has been running Barking Mad Home from Home Pet Care for two years.

She relies on host families to look after canines when customers go on holiday, and increased demand means she now needs more hosts.

"Some people say the best thing about being a grandparent is handing the children back at the end of the day," said Janet. "The canine equivalent for dogs is Barking Mad."

Barking Mad's host families meet the strict criteria and are all dedicated pet lovers. They are often retired people who miss the routine and exercise when they suddenly find themselves without a pet.

Alternatively, they may be at home during the day with children or pets of their own, and a visiting dog complements their existing situation perfectly.

"Being a host family is particularly appealing to retired people who love the companionship of dogs but cannot commit to having one full time," said Janet.

Potential hosts must be able to demonstrate a clear understanding of dog care, have somewhere warm and cosy for pets to sleep, continue home life routines for exercising and feeding,

have a safe garden and be at home during the day.

"All applicants are met at home, where an initial interview and home inspection are carried out," said Janet. "At this time straightforward questions about dog care experience and personal situation are asked, and then together the type of dogs the host would be able to look after and the host's availability are discussed."

She added: "If the application is successful, becoming a host family with Barking Mad is rewarding and great fun from the onset.

"For many people working as a host has quite literally changed their lives. Caring for a dog at home offers a real focus. Dog walking is incredibly sociable, and keeps you fit."

Hosts are provided with a comprehensive Barking Mad host handbook, which includes information about pet behaviour, pet care and first aid, although every host has the added peace of mind knowing that they have 24-hour back-up from the area office, seven days a week.

If you are interested in becoming a Barking Mad host, please contact Janet Locke on 01751 473111 or 07933 793488.

**GREAT FUN: Janet Locke of dog-sitting service Barking Mad. Picture: Nigel Holland**





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