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What recession? Luxury pet inn here is full

Pets pose with Santa, party on New Year's at the Barkley Pet Hotel and Day Spa

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ORANGE — Dexter Diamond was so excited to see Santa he couldn't stand still. He paced and pranced. He might have

even drooled a little.

But Santa didn't seem to mind. He picked the little Boston Terrier up and held him in his lap to pose for a picture.

Dexter was one of many

dogs waiting in line to see Santa at the Barkley Pet Hotel and Day Spa, 27349 Miles Road, Dec. 13.

Standing among the barking dogs in the lobby was Howard Perlmutter, president

and CEO of Beverly Hills Pet Hotels and owner of the Barkley. He said it was the first time Santa had been to the Barkley for pictures.

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PET

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"Everybody seems to have been a good dog this year and is going to get what they asked for (from Santa)," Perlmutter said.

Celebrating its second year of operation in February, the Barkley offers boarding for dogs and cats along with day care, grooming and obedience classes.

Accommodations range from traditional kennel style rooms for \$29 a night to pool side suites with TVs and leather couches for \$69 a night.

Perlmutter developed the concept for the Barkley while living in Los Angeles with his two golden retrievers.

"I decided to start the first chain for pet hospitality and change the industry," he said. "People thought I was crazy, but 50 percent of households have pets."

A former resident of Pepper Pike and a graduate of Orange High School, Perlmutter decided to open his first hotel in his hometown of Cleveland.

Despite the recent economic turmoil, Perlmutter said the hotel is completely full for the holiday season. More than 200 pets will be staying at the Barkley during the holidays, and there is a waiting list of more than 100.

"For us, it doesn't look like a recession," Perlmutter said. "In troubled times there are certain things in life that peo-



ANNA SUDAR/SPECIAL TO THE SUN NEWS
Dexter, a 3-year-old Boston Terrier, waits patiently to see Santa at the Barkley Pet Hotel. Dexter lives in Twinsburg.

ple aren't going to let slip, and taking care of pets is one of them."

The Barkley's holiday guests will be treated to holiday movies. They will be able to play with Santa on Christmas.

Events like pet pictures with Santa and the hotel's New Years Eve party are open to the public for a fee.

Kim Blount of Broadview Heights, who brings her dog Ethel to the Barkley for day camp, said her dog enjoys spending time at the Barkley and participating in its events. Dec. 13 was Ethel's second photography session with Santa and she was very well behaved, Blount said.

Photos with Santa were \$15. All the proceeds went to Pet Fix, a northeast Ohio mobile spay/neuter clinic that works to end pet overpopulation.

Photographer Michael Lichterman, president of Clif-

ford Norton Studios, donated his time to take photos at the event.

Lichterman has a lot of experience photographing pets. He said it takes patience. Here, he often had to shake a toy or bark to get the dogs to face the camera.

As for Santa — AKA known as Howard's father Roger Perlmutter — he said he was having a great time with the dogs.

Roger has dressed as Santa before, but to take pictures with children, not pets.

"The difference is with humans, I have candy canes in my right pocket, with dogs, it's right pocket candy canes, left pocket dog bones," he said.

For Adam Kilborne of Fairport Harbor, bringing his boxer Chloe to see Santa was something new to do.

"She's a rescued dog, so I'm trying to do nice things for her," he said.

Chloe can probably expect dog bones and a stuffed animal under the tree this year, Kilborne said.

Ethel will be getting a new dog bed from Santa to replace her old one that is worn out, Blount said.

And Dexter?

"He'll be getting coal for Christmas because he's very bad," his owner Mike Diamond said with a laugh. "No I'm just kidding. He'll get toys and treats."

For more information on The Barkley and its holiday events, visit thebarkleypethotel.com