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**SPECIAL SECTION**

## SMALL BUSINESS

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### Barking up the right tree

Howard Perlmutter, a native Northeast Ohioan, was living in Beverly Hills when he took note of the pet industry's growth potential back in 2001.

He then spent three years working on his business plan for "the Ritz Carlton" of pet hotels before building The Barkley Pet Hotel & Day Spa in Orange Village, which opened in 2007.

The pet hotel offers human amenities for dogs and cats being boarded, including flat-screen TVs, poolside "suites" with web cams and limo service to McDonald's.



**ABOVE LEFT:** The Barkley Pet Hotel & Day Spa in Orange Village offers many services, including bedtime stories. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The Barkley's top room is the poolside suite.



PHOTOS PROVIDED

His business plan included statistical analyses of land, demographics, pet industry trends and even the color of materials for the planned facility. A similar facility is to open in Los Angeles in fall.

The American Pet Products Association estimates that in 2009, Americans will spend an approximate \$45.4 billion on their pets — a \$2.2 billion increase from what pet owners shelled out in 2008.

At the Barkley, the posh resort experienced a 40% increase in revenue growth in its second year over the previous year, and Mr. Perlmutter said he expects this summer to begin selling pet food and eventually offering home day care for pets.

"We're growing every month," said Mr. Perlmutter, the company's president. ■