



Carrie Leensvaart-Feinberg Turns Setbacks Into Successes

Her Safe Haven Advocate Pet Care & Photography
Named NAPPS 2018 Business of the Year

By Arden Moore

Determined. Educated. Compassionate. Gutsy. It's hard to pin one label on Carrie Ann Leensvaart-Feinberg because she is always evolving and always striving to learn more and to do more. Not even two leg injuries, a career-altering car accident or even a rare allergy to metals can stop her from providing special care

to special needs pets and inspiring her growing professional pet sitting team.

For these reasons and many more, Leensvaart-Feinberg's Safe Haven Safe Haven Advocate Pet Care & Photography, LLC based in Elgin, IL has been selected as the 2018 NAPPS Business of the Year.

"To get an award like this three years into this business is quite an honor," says Leensvaart-Feinberg's Safe Haven. "I couldn't believe it when I got the news. This is a big deal."

And so is Leensvaart-Feinberg in the pet world. She has had to re-script her life due to unforeseen circumstances, but has a knack for turning setbacks into successes. She once had dreams of being a professional singer and earned a scholarship after high school to attend a prestigious vocal school.

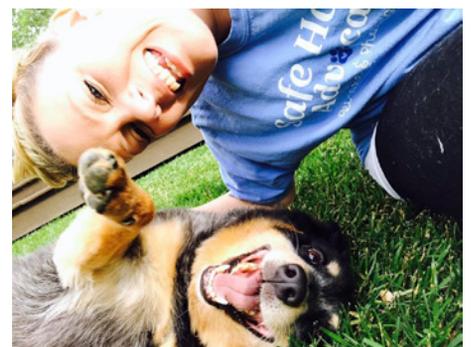
"I wanted to be Cinderella at Disney World," she recalls with a laugh. "But at the vocal performance school, I began having difficulty breathing and lost my voice completely. One cannot be a vocal major without a voice."

It turns out that Leensvaart-Feinberg developed a severe allergy to certain metals and the school was located near a battery plant. She had to withdraw. She shifted gears and earned eight certifications in advertising illustration and design, but realized she

was drawn more to emergency medicine. She earned her Emergency Medical Technician license and was on track to become a firefighter paramedic.

She and her parents were en route to Chicago in 2012 where she was going to be dropped off at a hospital to start a rotation at a burn unit when their Buick LeSabre was t-boned by a car whose driver ran a red light. She took the biggest hit and needed to be airlifted to a trauma center in nearby Downers Grove, IL for severe neck, arm, shoulder and abdominal injuries.

"I lost feeling in my fingers, arms and couldn't even open a bottle of pop with my right hand," she recalls. "I still graduated top 5 in my class even after my injuries, but I no longer had the strength to be a firefighter paramedic, a job that requires lifting people. I guess it was not in





the cards for me to be able to be a paramedic, but I do have national and state licenses as an EMT.”

She decided to turn her medical abilities for companion animals and worked her way up from veterinary clinic receptionist to veterinary assistant to veterinary technician at an emergency veterinary hospital. She also is certified as a pet first aid/CPR instructor and in Fear Free handling of pets.

“My first six years in veterinary practice, I worked alongside a board-certified animal behaviorist. That has given me the comfort, skills and knowledge in working with challenging dogs and cats,” she says.

And, she is also an accomplished photographer who uses her skills to showcase animals at area shelters and rescues to up their chances of landing loving homes.

Her background in medicine made Leensvaart-Feinberg realize she could serve an important niche in the professional pet sitting industry: providing care for pets with special medical and behavioral needs. That led her to launch her business now based in Elgin. She is comfortable in administering medications (and that includes injections and subcutaneous fluids) and invests the time to train her team in all aspects of pet care.

Nothing slows her down, not even a recent leg injury that occurred exactly one year to the day from a previous injury to the same leg.

“Carrie has a medical boot on, but she is still working,” notes Sommer Lena, a former client

who is now an IC working for her. “The medical and behavioral knowledge she has about animals is amazing and so is her compassion to provide them with the best possible care. It is a blessing to have her as our boss because she shares her knowledge with us.”

For the past two years, Judy Krupica has been relying on Leensvaart-Feinberg to pet sit her four pugs named Moe, Mickey, Mack and Ty. The latter is 13 who needed two surgeries to remove diseased eyes.

“Poor Ty was bumping into things in the house and Carrie recommended attaching a halo to his harness to protect him from injuring himself and it worked,” says Krupica. “I can’t say enough great things about Carrie. She is passionate and so is her team. I can count on her to provide the best care to my dogs.”

Sheila Verschoore agrees. She has three cats with special medical needs. Mini-Mo has hypertension and renal failure. Gigi is also in renal failure and has irritable bowel syndrome. Cicil has food allergies. All three require different diets.

“I need a pet sitter who is good at detail, very reliable and able to administer meds,” says Verschoore. “And that is Carrie. I have never seen anyone so devoted to animals, especially ones who have been abused or who have special assistance needs. Carrie is an angel for animals on Earth.”

At home, Leensvaart-Feinberg is a proud pet parent to three rescued dogs answering to the names of Ruby Lynn, Shelby Lee and Rainey Mae. She adopted Ruby Lynn, nicknamed Roo after the dog was hospitalized for multiple fractures to her right front leg after being attacked by two dogs. Shelby Lee, aka Jelly Bean, came into her life as a stray she suspected had been abused and abandoned. Rainey Mae, aka Small Fry, was shivering and emaciated in a forest when Feinberg’s car headlights spotted her.

“They are my world,” she declares.

A visit to the Safe Haven Advocate Pet Care & Photography website exemplifies her commitment to bringing out the healthy best in pets under Leensvaart-Feinberg care. She actively seeks out

NAPPS Business of the Year Perks

The NAPPS Business of the Year Award is presented to a member who has demonstrated outstanding business practices and vision in maintaining and growing their business. The honor includes:

- Complimentary participation in the 2018 Education and Networking Forum in Atlanta (inclusive of registration, lodging and transportation)
- Professionally prepared customized public relations press release to local media by the national NAPPS office
- The Safe Haven Advocate Pet Care & Photography, LLC company logo displayed on the NAPPS website for one year
- Recognition of Safe Haven Advocate Pet Care & Photography, LLC in the *Professional Pet Sitter Magazine* (Winter 2017 issue)
- Recognition of Safe Haven Advocate Pet Care & Photography, LLC company during the 2018 Education and Networking Forum
- Indefinite use of the “NAPPS Pet Sitting Business of the Year 2018” logo

pets with medical and behavioral challenges. And each month, she spotlights a client’s pet, including Abigail, a young pit bull suspected of being a bait dog in an illegal dog fighting group in Miami. She has recovered from her injuries.

Writes Leensvaart-Feinberg about Abigail, “*Just recently, Abigail was adopted by the wonderful Jason and Megan. Not only gaining a forever Mom, Dad and dog sister named Tala, but a spoiled life that she could have only imagined in a dream. We truly believe that Abigail is not only a hero and warrior, but an angel sent to spread awareness and help create miracles for all used and abused dogs.*”

Yes, Leensvaart-Feinberg has accomplished a lot, but keeps honing her skills in animal care and in running her fast-growing business. She acknowledges the major role NAPPS has played in her professional success.

“NAPPS gives you the support you need to help you continue to grow your business,” she says. “NAPPS has a stellar reputation and lots of resources you can access whenever you need them.” ■

Facts about Safe Haven Advocate Pet Care & Photography, LLC

Location: Elgin, IL

Established: 2014

Staff: 7 (6 ICs plus owner)

Owner: Carrie Leensvaart-Feinberg

Mission statement: “Our specialty is going above and beyond by raising the bar in standard of care one special pet at a time. Pets’ happiness, medical and emotional wellbeing, and owners’ peace of mind is our priority. We are pets’ best

friend, and owners devoted resource in pet care!

Member of NAPPS: Since 2016

Website: safehavenadvocatepetcare.com

Facebook: facebook.com/SHApetcare/

Fun facts about Carrie: She was born on Friday the 13 and rates Fettuccine Alfredo with shrimp and chicken as her favorite dish. She was trained to sing opera but prefers rhythm and blues music.

