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# Catering to critters

*Animal-loving couple's store combines retail, pet photography*

BY ELIZABETH GOLD

Business Report Correspondent

BOULDER — Sandy Calvin and Jeff Richey came together because Jeff's sister kept pointing out their similarities. Both were single parents raising four children. Both were photographers. Both had a passion for animals and animal rescue.

Now they've created a new common cause: They're co-owners of a shop that caters to dogs, cats and horses. It's not just another retail shop, however.

Farfel's Farm supports organizations that rescue animals by offering space for area humane societies to bring animals in that are ready for adoption. The store also sells items for Colorado Horse Rescue.

Another means of support is a monthly donation to organizations that focus on taking care of unwanted animals including the Doris Day League, the Elephant Sanctuary and Best Friends.

Farfel, by the way, is one of the couple's five dogs and can be found behind the counter most days.

Retail items include work by Colorado artists featuring jewelry, paintings and sculpture. Looking for a new outfit for your pet? The store carries animal clothes in addition to food, toys, leashes and collars.

Taking the love-of-animals theme one step further, Calvin and Richey apply their 20 years in the photography field to capture people with their animals, the animals alone, and even people alone. Photos are taken at the in-store studio or off-site.

"We've actually exceeded projections and were able to pay all our operational expenses in the first month," Richey said. "To succeed on Pearl Street you need to show a high level of customer service."

The store offers a service that saves customers from having to find parking places in the busy downtown area. "We have an alley service where we meet customers in the alley with their food," Richey added. "I even help people carry things to their cars."

"The Farfel Five Club" is a system to help Calvin and Richey know their customers better and build a database of animal lovers at the same time. When customers give their contact info and pet's name, breed and birthday, they join the club and receive an in-store discount.

"The database helps me know if their dog has any special food needs," Richey said. "We have about 700 people in it so far."



STEVE PETERSON

**At Farfel's Farm in Boulder, Sandy Calvin and Jeff Richey combine their love of animals with 20 years' experience in the photography field. In addition to the photography studio, the store sells work by Colorado artists and pet products from close to 100 different vendors, many of them small, high-end suppliers.**

Farfel's photography studio is the store's fastest-growing draw. Calvin and Richey are booking about four sessions each week. "We're not high end, and we don't want to be," Calvin said. "People get what they want for a reasonable price. We have a low overhead because we take the photos."

Packages start at \$129. On-site they shoot about 50 to 75 shots in 20 to 30 minutes. Customers then pick what they want and walk out of the store with it.

Farfel's maintains about \$60,000 worth of inventory from close to 100 different vendors.

Many of the retail items are consignment pieces. Some of the jewelry, for example, is custom made for Farfel's.

Because they self-funded the enterprise, Calvin and Richey cut as many corners as possible to get the look they wanted at a price they could afford. "We did a lot of work with people we knew for trades," Calvin said. "For the fountain, we asked if we could get it at cost if we put their name on a plaque, and they said, 'yes.'"

The couple painted the original concrete floor because they couldn't afford to construct another floor. "It's funny because people ask how they can get one like it," Calvin added.