

The Wag Shop Goes Green!

The newest Congress Park business to achieve certification through the City of Denver's Certifiably Green Denver program shares what it takes to become a sustainable business.

Interview by Liz Goehring, CPN Green Team Member

The Wag Shop, a premier dog grooming salon and retail dog and cat boutique on Colfax Ave, recently received certification as a Green Business through the Certifiably Green Denver Program. Congress Park Neighbors' Green Team would like to say "Thanks, Wag Shop!" for going that extra mile to embrace sustainable business practices that help all of us.

For those who are not familiar with Certifiably Green Denver, it is a free, confidential environmental assistance program designed to help local businesses find ways to improve efficiency and profitability, while preventing waste and conserving resources.

The Wag Shop, at 2626 E Colfax Ave, is the newest Congress Park Business to become certified by Certifiably Green Denver. Deidre Hered (Owner) and Marvin Garcia (Manager) shared their experience with Liz Goehring (CPN Green Team member) for this article.



The Wag Shop owners and staff celebrate their recent certification with Certifiably Green Denver.



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Liz: First off, congratulations on your certification! I understand you are Denver's FIRST Certified Green Dog Grooming Salon. Way to go, setting the standard! Tell us a little about your business.

Deidre: We are a dog grooming salon and retail dog and cat boutique. We pride ourselves on the quality of our services and products. To us, this is what makes the difference in shopping here. We are not a pet supply store - we strive to serve our community as a local business that knows our customers well, and cares deeply for their pets. We also believe in supporting other local businesses through our retail sales.

Our mission statement is to provide the best grooming experience and retail products for our customers, using as many environmentally friendly practices and products as possible.



Happy dogs don bubble hats during a grooming session. The shop has introduced innovative water-saving measures and a recirculation system. The shop also composts and donates shed fur and clippings to help with oil spill cleanup efforts.

Liz: I understand that your initial assessment with Emily Backus, CGD Sustainability Advisor, went really well, in large part because of all the things you were already doing that qualified towards your certification. Can you tell me about some of those things?

Deidre: Sure. Well, we were already doing pretty well with things like LED lights, and switching to e-receipts to reduce paper. I'd say probably the biggest thing we had going for us already was our water-saving bathing system. As a dog grooming salon, we use a lot of water every day to wash dogs, and early on, we invested in a recirculating bathing system that saves gallons and gallons of water, saves energy to heat water, saves on shampoo, and we think makes the dogs cleaner. It's hugely efficient, and we've had this system from the very beginning. It was just the right thing to do! Plus it saves us money!

We also generate a LOT of hair that normally gets thrown away. It seemed like such a waste. About six years ago, we shipped hair to the Gulf for remediation efforts after the big oil spill. After that, we found out that you can compost hair, so I started doing that as well. We also give hair to clients for their gardens and anti-squirrel efforts.

Liz: Wow, that's great! That could really add up to a lot of waste! What else?

Deidre: On the retail side of things, we definitely believe in buying local products. In fact, we feel this differentiates us from the larger chains. We have local dog collars, jackets with Colorado logos, bones and antlers from a small company in MT, and good quality dog toys that really last! We have lots of fantastic local vendors with awesome products, and when it comes to food, local products are definitely fresher coming from a shorter distance. Plus, most are not processed. I don't eat processed foods, why should I sell processed pet foods and snacks to my customers for their pets? If you want good quality products at a reasonable price, we are it! You will get a product that lasts, and is healthier for your pet.

And the best part is that our clients (the dogs) LOVE to come in here!!!

Liz: I know! My dogs love the treats, all conveniently placed at their nose level, I might add!

So, what about these funky metal dog statues, and fancy dog beds?

Deidre: My husband and I are experimenting with building "upcycled products". These are dog beds we repurposed from wood shipping pallets and furniture pieces. You can't really recycle pallets but you can repurpose them. The duvet cover we provide with the bed is stuffed by you with your own old clothes or blankets so these items aren't ending up in our landfills (plus, your dog always wants to be near you so having your scent in bed is great). This has been a labor of love for us and we are really enjoying helping the environment by being creative.





A happy pup chews on a Fluff & Tuff Toy, one of the brands available at the Wag Shop.

Liz: Fantastic! Well, there had to be some things you weren't already doing, before you got certified. What things did you learn from Emily that you could do to improve your green business practices?

Deidre: Actually Marvin can probably tell you more about that since he's managed most of the certification process.

Marvin: Well, we've definitely become more diligent about recycling, adding more containers for waste management, and recycling bins in almost every room. We're excited about our waste audit and expect good results. Already we're seeing improvements - we only empty trash about twice a week now, whereas before it was full every day.

We've also set up a Green Team that meets quarterly. The team includes Deidre, myself and one of our groomers, to get different perspectives. We also now have a suggestion box where any other employee can suggest things.

All of our bills are eBills now, making it easier to pop open and pay. And thanks to the program, we now have a new low-flow faucet in our kitchen sink and a new bike rack, both provided by the program at no cost to us.

All in all, since we were doing so many green things before, it was easy to take the final few steps to get certified. The whole process was surprisingly easy, and Emily (our sustainability advisor) was incredibly knowledgeable and helpful. She explained things really well, and was proactive. Honestly, the whole program seems really generous, particularly for a small business.

Liz: Do you think this will have an impact on your employees, and on your clientele?

Marvin: Sure, It's teaching all of us how to be more aware of our carbon footprint, and what we can actually do about it. I would say that it is extending to our clientele too - customers are coming in asking what we're doing! We are happy to be spreading the word about how we can all contribute environmentally.

Liz: Any final thoughts?

Marvin: Absolutely - we're thinking of adding "green tips" in the newsletter. So stay tuned! Come in with your pet and check us out! Your pet will love it!

Certifiably Green Denver is a free program offered by the City & County of Denver's Environmental Health Department that helps businesses find ways to conserve resources and save money. CGD advisors have assisted over 1,800 Denver businesses and have certified over 210. For more information and to see a list of certified businesses, visit www.denvergov.org/certifiablygreen. Interested in participating? Contact an advisor by calling 720.865.5457 or email CertifiablyGreenDenver@denvergov.org

