

Petsitter offers services to those who help

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Just after Hurricane Wilma rampaged through the western portion of Boca Raton last October, Sandy Devita's duty as a 911 dispatcher for the city kept her away from her home for long shifts with no one to care for her pets, and she had few options.

"You want to be able to work and still care for them," said Devita, who has spent 10 years as a city dispatcher. "But it just becomes too difficult having them home alone for so long."

What she did know, was that her neighbor right across the street from her Palmetto Pines home had just started an in-home pet sitting service.

Each woman's story struck a chord with the other, and now Devita's neighbor, Carol Richards, is reaching out to other emergency workers.

Richards, a former social worker from New Jersey, started her in-home pet sitting service called Your Pets Crib last January. A pet owner herself, Richards got a glimpse into the effects of long absences have on animals.

And she applies that principal to her business.

Her in-home service allows animals to stay in the comfort of their own home. Pets are walked, fed and groomed as much as four times a day during the hours when pet owners cannot be there, and owners can also avoid the caged environment of

kennels, and the dreaded kennel-cough.

One particular area where Richards identified a need was in emergency workers during a hurricane.

"After I watched what many of my neighbors went through last year, it just really made me want to help out our neighbors, and this community," she said.

In less than a year, Richards said, she had to regulate traveling distance so that customers would be within a 10-mile radius so she could operate efficiently. With her new business, Richards hopes to reach out to emergency workers such as police, fire and rescue for the upcoming hurricane season.

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"The truth is pet sitting can be rather costly and I try to keep things affordable," Richards said. "People have enough going on during a disaster, it can put a lot of stress on animals."

last 30-minutes or more, she said.

And there is hardly a pet that she will turn down.

"I even looked after horses once," she said.

For more information about Your Pets Crib services or pricing visit www.yourpetscrib.com or call 561-693-8387.



FURRY FRIENDS: West Boca resident Carole Richards is extending her services to local emergency workers during this year's hurricane season. Photo by Daniel White