

The Jackson Sun

August 27, 2008

Keep pets at home

Pet sitters like Suzanne Istvanko of Time Saver Services will stop by to feed, water, walk and medicate as needed.

"It's less traumatic on the animals" to stay home when the family has to leave," said customer Leslie Webster of South Jackson, who has left three dogs, a turtle and sugar glider named Rocky under Istvanko's watch.

The pet-sitter has "had horses, goats, chickens, ferrets" and more. "At one point, I had 13 birds," she said.

"We used to call her Elly May," Webster said of "The Beverly Hillbillies" character known to take in all kinds of critters.

"The last job I had, they raise rabbits. There were 15 to 20, and four or five had babies while I was watching them," Istvanko said. "They had a fish tank and dogs. I had to walk the dogs and put them in kennels outside during the day. Then, they would go inside in kennels for night. When the owners are home, they have the run of the house."

Three visits a day are common for households where pets are used to lots of human interaction. Istvanko works in thorough house cleaning, too, if requested.

"People like to come home to a clean house," she said. Timing is ideal because no one is around to be disrupted by scrubbing, dust bunnies in flight and vacuuming.

Time Saver Services will reach its first anniversary the end of September. Services also include house-sitting.

"My schedule is very flexible," the former office worker said. Business is centered in Madison, Gibson and Carroll counties, but other jobs can be arranged with an additional travel fee outside a 20-mile radius.

Rachael Mahalati of Three Way gave Istvanko a "five-star rating" for care of her Newfoundland puppy. "She did a wonderful job. Kennels wouldn't take him because he didn't have his shots," Mahalati said of the 8- to 10-week-old that weighs 70 pounds just a couple of months later. "She took him into her own home."

An even larger job was a quarter horse weanling. Istvanko kept the foal on her 32-acre property for six months.

"Suzanne's really good with animals," Shelia Cooper of Lavinia said. "She assesses everybody's needs and is flexible in trying to do what you need and want you want with them. She tries to keep their routine, and she gives love with care."

Istvanko is listed on www.sittercity.com, which also provides information for other services, including nannies, child and senior care, and tutoring.