

Run! Day Camp for Dogs

By Scott Laird

You've probably driven past the numerous vans or buses. Each van says 'Run!' in big letters across the front and sides. You may have noticed them on their way to and from Vernonia each day during the last year and a half.

Well, in case you've been wondering, those vans and buses are filled with dogs who are either coming or going from a 'day camp' where they spend the day running and playing with other dogs.

Run! is a local business, owned and managed by Erica Ochs, located about 1.5 miles up Keasey Road. Each

day upwards of fifty dogs arrive from the Portland metro area to spend the day exercising and staying active on the twenty-four acres of fenced and heavily wooded property. Most of the dogs at Run! would be locked up at home, inside all day while their owners are at work. Run! provides a convenient service, transporting the dogs to a place where they can... well, run!

"We offer a pick-up and drop-off service, that's a big part of our business," says Ochs.

During a recent visit to the Run! property I had a chance to experience first hand what it's like to be greeted and surrounded by about thirty dogs. They



were very curious about the newcomer. Some wanted to say hello and receive a pat, others just wanted to give me a sniff and see who I was, and others stayed a few feet away, not wanting to get too close.

I also had a chance to witness another big part of the business - the human and canine interaction the dogs receive each day. Workers are with the dogs all day while they are on the property, re-directing their energy and correcting them when needed. They play, pet and talk with the dogs, giving them positive feedback as well. The dogs get socialized with all types of other dogs and learn how to behave in a large group. Sometimes it looks like the workers are having as much fun as, or maybe more, than the dogs.

Ochs says she has been working

with dogs and getting them outside to run free for the last seventeen years. After graduating from college she had her sights set on a job in the corporate world. "Then I realized that I couldn't take my dog to work with me," says Ochs. "I wasn't going to take a job and leave my dog locked up all day." Ochs found a handful of clients in Northwest Portland and began walking and running their dogs in Forest Park. She then leased property in Banks and established the current model for her business—a pick-up and drop-off day camp. Eventually she was able to purchase her own property in Columbia County just outside of Vernonia and brought her preexisting clientele with her.

Ochs, with help from business partner Dick Titus, has designed the

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