

Floofins and Co. Stays in Step with Clients' Expanding Needs

Kristin Skelton's Company Earns NAPPS 2020 Business of the Year Honors

By Arden Moore

Kristin Skelton is an accomplished dancer who particularly enjoys ballet, modern, jazz, and now aerial silks. She knows the importance of timing and making the right dance moves. She applies this same approach as founder and owner of Floofins and Co., Inc., a fast-growing pet care business based in Elmhurst, IL.

Since launching a decade ago, she has strategically grown her staff to 25 and service offerings to her ever-expanding loyal clientele base.

"We consider ourselves a boutique pet care service – personal and local, but with all the bells and whistles of the big tech companies," she says.

For these reasons and more, Floofins has been selected as the NAPPS 2020 Business of the Year.

"I'm so pleased to see Kristin receive this award as she has been an amazing asset to our NAPPS association and I know she has an equally amazing business," says Yvette Gonzales, NAPPS immediate past president and owner of As You Wish Pet Sitters, based in Highlands Ranch, CO. "Kristin has advanced the association with her commitment to various committees and has given freely of her time and energy."

News of this honor proved to be quite timely – in step with Floofins marking its 10th anniversary in business in 2020.

But more than a decade ago, Skelton was traveling and working long hours as the director of marketing for an architecture firm. She did not want to continue boarding her beloved pair of Maltese dogs named Portia and Priscilla, after they returned home with blood in their stools and full of stress.

Option B at the time – hiring someone like a college student to come to her home to care for her dogs – also did not fare well.

"I had cameras to check in on my dogs, but there were times when the

college students did not come and meals were missed and there was poop on the floor," she recalls. "I thought there has got to be a better way, so I started researching pet sitting companies. I ended up leaving the corporate world with a mission to create a kenneling alternative for fellow pet parents."

Skelton, who has a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree in business, knew she needed to reach out to successful professional pet sitters, so she attended the 2009 NAPPS Forum.

Yep, she attended the conference in Orlando determined to network and soak up tips from the presenters and attendees a full year before she launched Floofins in 2010.

"Getting my business up and running with NAPPS was huge," she says. "While networking at my first NAPPS conference, experienced pet sitters gave me plenty of great advice, such as putting a cancellation policy in place and get this and that in your contract. NAPPS is amazing and I have not missed a conference since."

Once a member, Skelton got involved with the NAPPS marketing committee and took over for the initial website redesign task force when the original chair became ill. She is hoping to resume taking a more active role with NAPPS within the next five years when her new baby, Eden enters school. She and her husband, also have a three-year-old son, Samuel.

Currently, her focus is on make the right hires, providing ongoing education for her staff, catering to the needs of her clients and utilizing the best time-saving technology.

"Nothing good will come from quick hiring and expansion," she says. "We also are looking at how the hiring process is changing due to technology and the Millennial generation's different style. Providing stellar care for our clients is first and foremost, and that is facilitated by nurturing and supporting our staff members."

The hiring process at Floofins is deliberately comprehensive in order for Skelton to select "diamonds" in the pet care staff industry. Once hired, staff attend quarterly meetings and take an eight-online course series she created called Floofin U that covers standard operation procedures, care for dogs, cats, birds, chickens, rabbits, reptiles and fish as well as certification in pet first aid/CPR. She rewards staff with "I survived the holidays" parties and summer barbecues. All full-time employees are offered health care, paid time off and plans are in the works to add a 401K or SEP plan.

Marketing to her clients in the Chicagoland area is also key. She and her team are involved in many charity events, including Roofs for Floofs, Cantigny Park Dog Days, Hinsdale Humane

Fun Facts About Floofins & Co., Inc.

Location: Elmhurst, IL, serving cities in the Chicagoland area

Established: 2010

Services Provided: Pet sitting for dogs, cats, birds, rabbits, frogs and critters, puppy housebreaking training, dog walking and hourly pet concierge.

Owner/Founder: Kristin Skelton

Staff: A total of 25 in the administrative and pet care teams.

Mission statement: "To provide the highest caliber in-home pet care services for our cherished clients and their beloved pets. We do this by hiring exceptional employees, providing them with regular ongoing training, and delivering consistently stellar service."

Member of NAPPS: Since 2009, a year before Skelton officially started Floofins and Co., Inc.

Website: www.floofinsandco.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/floofinsandco/>

Society Pet Walk as well as a monthly newsletter sent out to more than 1,500 Floofins fans.

What's the future hold? Skelton is right in step with her response:

"Our goal is to be a leader in the use of technology and automation for internal administrative needs while simultaneously maintaining the high level of personal touch that clients and employees expect," she says. ■

NAPPS Business of the Year Perks

The NAPPS Business of the Year Award is presented to a member who has demonstrated outstanding business practices and vision in maintaining and growing their business. The honor includes:

- Complimentary participation in the next Education and Networking Forum at a site to be announced (inclusive of registration, lodging and transportation)
- Professionally prepared customized public relations press release to local media by the national NAPPS office
- The Floofins company logo displayed on the NAPPS website for one year.
- Recognition of Floofins company in the *Professional Pet Sitter Magazine* (this Winter 2019 issue)
- Indefinite use of the "NAPPS Pet Sitting Business of the Year 2020" logo

Fun facts about Kristin:

- She earned a double major in journalism and dance at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, and achieved this feat in four years. She also has a master's degree in business.
- She and her husband, Chris both attended the University of Iowa at the same time, but did not meet until they were both living in Chicago.
- She earned money for college by working tables at the Olive Garden and Red Lobster.
- She enjoys kayaking and calls herself a horror movie junkie.



What People are Saying About Kristin Skelton

Joette White, owner of Park Cities Pet Sitter and 2017 NAPPS Business of the Year recipient: "I have had the privilege of knowing Kristin Skelton for several years and she is one of my favorite people on the planet. She is an incredible business woman who truly cares about her staff and her clients. I am so excited for her as this award is very much deserved!"

Michelle Tenuta, of Elmhurst, IL, a Floofins client for six years: "I selected Floofins because they were extremely professional from the start. I love that they post pictures and a summary of care for my pets (3 cats named Bear, Moochy and Pita) on their app. I have one cat who is very timid and often hides. Kristin's team goes out of their way to locate her and make sure she is okay. I really appreciate how they do whatever it takes to make sure my pets are happy, healthy and safe."

Jennifer Veremis, of Elmhurst, IL, a Floofins client for five years. "Kristin's attention to detail and from our phone consultation to the client portfolio I had to fill out, gave me great comfort. They make it very easy to book services, pay and communicate special needs your pet may have. My dog, Hugo (a senior golden retriever) needed eye and paw surgery and they followed all our doctor's orders. The care Floofins has provided for my dog, Hugo exceeds my expectations."

Floofins Seven Core Values

The seven Floofins Core Values are prominently posted on the company's website. These values include:

- Treating clients' pets as the Floofins team members would want their own pets to be treated.
- Delivering wonderful service, being prepared for the unexpected and always striving to exceed expectations.
- Relating to clients with kindness and compassion.
- Working as a team to provide seamless delivery of services to clients.
- Building open and honest relationships with accountability as a priority.
- Pursuing growth and learning continuously for all staff.
- Giving back to the community through volunteer opportunities, including shelter and rescue work, as well as company-sponsored events and programs.