

Amy Reed

One Walk at a Time

Sitting in her office chair, Amy Reed hears the subtle jingle of charms from her wrist. She looks to these charms and is reminded of what is important. She wears this bracelet, which once belonged to her mother, on special occasions or when she needs to feel her mother close. For Amy, these charms represent all of the aspects of her mother's life and what was most important to her. Amy smiles as she reviews each charm and its significance.

A Shamrock charm that signifies her family's Irish roots, a Notre Dame Football for where her mother and father met, and a wedding ring charm symbolizing her parent's happy marriage. Also, the bracelet holds a small angel charm and a cross for her mother's unyielding faith and beliefs. The number 7 charm stands for the seven grandchildren and the "Mom" charm embodies what an amazing mother and nurturer she was for Amy and her brothers. As Amy looks at the final charm, a dog, she is reminded of her first year as a business owner and the encouragement she received from her mother. "My mom was the biggest supporter of Woofie's and she was such a big influence on our business from day one."

Amy's mother passed away in 2015 after a long fight with cancer. Amy cherishes the time she spent being a full-time caregiver for her mother during the last three months of her life. "To be able to care for my mother in her final days was a privilege of a lifetime. For me that experience was the most defining moment of my life." Amy recalls her mother's courage and resilience during her ongoing battle with cancer saying, "My mother had a quiet strength and an unwavering trust in God. She fought her cancer with grace and dignity until the very end, 6 days shy of her 50th wedding anniversary."

Amy and her mother shared a passion for animals. Amy, the Co-Owner and Co-Founder of

Woofie's, LLC explains that she encountered a need 14 years ago for a professional and trustworthy pet sitting service while she was traveling for her corporate job. "Privacy and security are really important to me. I was traveling for work and did not want a stranger coming into my home to care for my dogs but taking them to a boarding facility was not an option." Recognizing this as a possible business venture, Amy explains, "I always liked the idea of leaving corporate and owning my own business. With my Marketing background and passion for animals, I knew it was the right fit."



In 2004 she and her Co-Owner, Leslie Barron, started Woofie's, a professional pet care company that offers dog walking, pet sitting, overnight care, and pet taxi services in Ashburn and Lansdowne, Virginia. In the early days, Amy and Leslie were walking dogs literally night and day. "I loved the marketing and sales aspect of my previous corporate jobs but I did not feel fulfilled, so I took a leap of faith with my neighbor Leslie. It was the best decision we ever made." For many years their pet sitting clients inquired about grooming services so they bought a van in 2011 with a bootstrap investment and hired a groomer to launch their mobile pet spa service. Today they have 7 mobile pet spa vans. "The mobile pet spa service eliminates the stress for the pet and the owner as it personalizes the overall experience. The pet is groomed in the privacy of a mobile pet spa van which has all the comforts and amenities of a salon environment". For Amy, Woofie's is a highly personal business because clients are entrusting them with not only their beloved pets but also their homes. "I take it as an honor anytime a client gives us the keys to their home. We built our business from day one by recognizing and respecting the high level of personal service that is required by our clients."

Fourteen years later, this leap of faith has proven to be a successful adventure for Amy and Leslie. "I could not ask for anything better than being able to blend my business experience with the independence and autonomy of running a company and caring for animals." Leveraging their successful business model in Ashburn, Woofie's has begun the process of building its franchise program, confident that this type of personalized pet service can be replicated in markets throughout the U.S.

Amy was born into a family of Notre Dame fans in Columbus, Ohio. In so many ways the university is a special place for her family, especially now that her mother is buried there with an eternal view of the Golden Dome. Amy says her paternal grandfather was a coal miner, and her father was the first in his hometown to attend college. "Because they did not have money for travel, my dad would hitchhike back and forth each semester to Notre Dame," she says. While her father was at Notre Dame he met Amy's mother who attended Saint Mary's College. Shortly after her father graduated, her parents were married. Amy's mother decided to leave Saint Mary's to begin the family they pictured although she had two years left of school.

Amy's father was a hard-working CFO and a devoted family man. Amy says, "When I think of my dad from my childhood, I remember him in a suit coming home from work to make sure he was there in time for every school function and sporting event." Amy describes her father as someone who could be put in a room and make conversation with anyone. "He is very kind and gets along with everyone. And he always put his family first." For Amy, her parent's commitment to their family and the importance of education were top priorities. After her children were older, Amy's mother returned to college at Ohio State University and pursued a career of her own. "It was important to her to go back and finish school, and she graduated summa cum laude." Her mother's determination was inspiring and Amy often sought her mother's advice especially during the beginning stages of her career after college.

Amy is the youngest child and has two older brothers who are also successful and a source of motivation for her. Her oldest brother, Tom is a M&A investment banker and Gary is a doctor and entrepreneur. Amy recalls her family being very competitive and always striving to do their best. "I

come from a very intelligent family with a strong work ethic. Growing up I wanted to push myself to be as good as my brothers and that competitive spirit is what pushes me now in my business," Amy says. One of her fondest family memories is attending her older brothers' soccer games and cheering for them with her parents. She says, "I loved watching them play and learning everything I could from them."

As a child Amy describes playing sports year-round, excelling in school, and always being busy. "During the summer time in Ohio I would leave in the morning on my bike with my friends to go to the pool and local parks and we were gone all day. We were adventurous and active and we would always be home for dinner," she says. Amy describes her neighborhood while growing up as a safe place for her and her friends to explore, where everyone knew everyone else and front doors could be left unlocked.

Amy's love of animals began at a young age, with her room full of stuffed animals instead of dolls. Amy laughs saying, "I had so many stuffed animals and I had a box with index cards for each one with their name and information about them." She also remembers an emotional trip she took with her childhood best friend, Kassie. Kassie's mother was driving and a small rodent ran into the road and was hit by the car. Amy says she cried for the remainder of the four hours back to her home, feeling so sorry for the tiny animal. "I loved animals from a very early age." For Christmas, when Amy was in fifth grade her family took her to the animal shelter to pick out their family dog, Cocoa. "She was my dog, but everyone loved her and we all took care of her."

Growing up in the Midwest, Amy's family encouraged traveling and experiencing new cultures. "My maternal grandfather was an internationally renowned architect and would take us with him on his many travels. By the time I reached high school I had been to Japan, Russia, and many countries in Europe and Scandinavia," she recalls. "It showed us there was a big world out there and to reach out for every experience." To this day Amy is very passionate about traveling and would one day like to live in another country. "My only regret about college is that I did not study abroad for a semester. I also wish I had taken time after college to travel more throughout Europe," she says.

During high school Amy played soccer

year-round, both in school and competitively. "I played indoor and outdoor soccer, on both girls and boys teams," she says. Her father's competitive edge encouraged her to be the best at whatever she did, so she was Captain of the soccer team and President of the Student Council while maintaining her academics. She says that as an adolescent she was always working to make her own money and her first job was working at the Original Cookie in the mall. "I worked several different jobs in high school and college. I always loved to work and make my own money."

Amy's teacher from the sixth grade, Katy Paolini, recognized this determined spirit in Amy and continued to support her into her high school years. She recounts, "I always wanted to be as good as my brothers and often compared myself to them. Katy is an incredible teacher. She stayed in touch with me and many other students over the years, even to this day thanks to Facebook." Mrs. Paolini sent Amy notes of encouragement in high school after Amy scored a game winning goal against a team that was undefeated and when she was voted onto Homecoming Court her freshman year. Amy laughs, "She sent me a note saying, 'Congratulations. This is something your brothers will never get to do.' That meant a lot to me and gave me a good laugh."

After high school Amy attended Notre Dame, following the family tradition of her great uncle, father and two brothers. At the end of high school Amy entered college believing she wanted to be a criminal prosecutor. "I loved the idea of arguing in court all day long," she said. Amy continued to play soccer on an intramural level and was focused on becoming independent and enjoying her college experience, especially with the winning football seasons during the Lou Holtz era. "My dad was always supportive and never doubted me. When I stressed about what I was going to do post-college, he would tell me not to worry and that I was going to be just fine," she recounts.

Inspired by the business classes she took while in college, Amy was eager to join the workforce and start earning her own living. After graduating in 1994 with a degree in Sociology, she moved to St. Louis and worked in telecom sales for AllNet Communications. "My father always told me that I would be good at sales, and this was an aggressive type of sales that taught me to be tough and think on my feet. I learned how to handle

different personalities. I met a lot of people, closed a lot of sales and did really well," she says. In fact, within her first year with AllNet Communications, Amy won several national sales competitions and was promoted to Sales Manager of the New Jersey office. She recalls, "At the age of twenty-three, I was managing several employees including many who were much older than I was and who had much more experience." In the years that followed many of the telecom companies merged and the names changed. Amy moved to Cleveland as a Sales Trainer, and then became the Director of Training out of the corporate office. She recalls, "I was developing the curriculum and training the sales teams throughout the US. I was traveling all the time and I really loved it."

After moving to Virginia for a short time, Amy went to California's Silicon Valley to do marketing and public relations for a dot.com start-up company. "It was an exciting time to be there and I loved marketing, but the corporate world and all the office politics were not anything I enjoyed," she says. Once Amy returned to Virginia, she was financially successful and working remotely for a content security company. "During this time I knew without a doubt that I needed to make a change in my life as I knew that I was capable of doing more. I was finally ready to take the leap and leave corporate," she recounts. After twelve years in the corporate world, Amy left her six-figure paycheck to start Woofie's.

Another leap of faith for Amy was partnering with Leslie, her neighbor and good friend. "Everyone told me that partnering with a friend could be risky, but we really complement one another and we work hard together. We have the same Midwest work ethic," she says. "My interest is the business side of our company and planning for future growth, while Leslie is the people person." Amy and Leslie have created a culture at Woofie's that is open and welcoming. Amy says, "We walk dogs every day, so while we are professional, we are certainly not formal. We want our staff to enjoy what they are doing, work hard and take great care of our clients and our client's pets." As a leader for her staff, Amy is fair and considerate of their opinions and ideas. She says, "I am direct, but am also the first one to be flexible and change if there is a better way of doing something. I am constantly looking for ways to improve processes." Working with many young staff and potential business leaders, Amy advises

them to take risks, work hard, earn their success and, most importantly, always understand that no one is entitled to anything.

Over fourteen years, Woofie's has earned several awards and honors. Most recently, Pet Age presented Amy and Leslie with the Women of Influence Award for 2018 and CEO Report presented Woofie's with a 2018 Corporate Culture Award. Woofie's was named Best Groomers in 2013, 2014, and 2016 and Best Pet Sitters in 2011 and 2015 from Northern Virginia Magazine; Best Pet Care Company by Washingtonian Magazine from 2011-2017; and Best Groomers & Best Dog Walkers by Posh 7 Magazine in 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2018. Gaining national recognition in 2013, Woofie's was named a Top 20 National Semi-finalist for Intuit's Small Business/Big Game Super Bowl Contest. In 2015 Woofie's was named a Top 100 Small Business in the US by the US Chamber of Commerce and in the fall of 2017, Woofie's was featured on CNBC's tv show *The Job Interview*. For Amy, the most important award is being named Best Pet Services Company in Loudoun County in 2016, 2017 and 2018 by the Loudoun Times-Mirror. "This award in particular means so much because it is in our backyard and awarded by the people we work with every day."

At home, Amy has her three dogs, Toby, Dude and Bogey, who are the loves of her life. Her business

with Leslie is thriving and she is so thankful for the leaps of faith she took that have brought her to where she is today. Thinking back to that first year of business Amy says, "Leslie and I were each doing 25 walks or more a day and had no administrative staff. We built Woofie's from the ground level and we will continue to work hard in building our business each year, one groom and one walk and now one franchise at a time."

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About Gordon J. Bernhardt

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