

SUCCESS STORY

The Dog Penn

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<https://thedogpenn.com/>

PENNSYLVANIA

S B D C

Small Business
Development Center
Duquesne University

*Helping businesses
start, grow, and prosper.*

Duquesne University SBDC

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Industry:

Off leash,
indoor/outdoor dog
park and bar

Year Founded:

2023

SBDC Assistance:

Funding Options, Market Analysis,
Business and Financial Planning.

Consultant:

Denis Olson



From Nomads to Neighborhood Heroes — The Birth of Pittsburgh’s First Off-Leash Dog Bar

When Alissa and Travis May were globe-trotting seasonal nomads, they never imagined that a rescue dog from a remote Alaskan village would inspire their next great adventure. But that’s exactly what happened when Sabre, a spirited pup with a heart full of love, entered their lives.

Grounded by the pandemic and newly settled in Alaska, the Mays embraced the stability that came with staying in one place — and with it, the opportunity to adopt a dog. Sabre quickly became more than a pet; he was family. In Alaska, Sabre had the freedom to roam, play, and accompany them almost everywhere. Life was good.

But when the couple relocated to Alissa’s hometown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, they were surprised to find a lack of dog-friendly spaces. The vibrant, dog-loving community they expected was nowhere to be found. Instead, they encountered fenced-in lots with no amenities and few places where Sabre could join them for a drink or a bite.

During their cross-country journey from Alaska to Pennsylvania, they had visited quirky, dog-centric spots that blended fun for both humans and their furry companions. So why didn’t Pittsburgh — a city full of pet lovers — have anything like that? That question sparked a bold idea.

The Mays came to the Duquesne University SBDC with a vision to create a space where dogs could play freely and humans could unwind. The initial assistance was a discussion of Opportunity, Funding options, and Market analysis. As we moved forward, helping them to prepare a Business and Financial plan became a priority. Also having bi-weekly meetings leading up to the eventual approval of funding were held.

The Mays launched Pittsburgh’s first off-leash dog bar — a unique fusion of a dog park and a bar. Spanning nearly 7,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor space, the venue offers a safe, social environment for dogs and a relaxing, community-driven atmosphere for their humans.

Today, this one-of-a-kind dog bar is more than just a business — it’s a celebration of community, companionship, and the unbreakable bond between people and their pets. Thanks to Alissa, Travis, and Sabre, Pittsburgh now has a place where tails wag, drinks flow, and friendships — both furry and human — are made every day.

