



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 8, 2015

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Tumwater's Mud Bay Named 2015 Retailer of the Year

Pet Business magazine honors NW independent pet retail chain's passion for pets, people

TUMWATER — Their customers give them two paws up, and now “Pet Business” magazine has made it official: Mud Bay, the Pacific Northwest’s largest independent pet retailer, has been selected as the 2015 Retailer of the Year.

Citing the store’s passion for pets and people, the Tumwater-based company is profiled in the [July 2015 edition](#) of the pet retail industry magazine. Mud Bay’s core focus on merchandise that contributes to the health of dogs and cats, a quality shopping experience and knowledgeable, solution-minded staff make the retailer an outstanding choice for this year’s award, according to the publication.

Mark Kalaygian, associate publisher and editor in chief for “Pet Business” magazine, singled out the independent retailer for a shopping experience that appeals to dog and cat owners, citing warm modern stores that play host to service-centered staff who focus on solutions over sales. Mud Bay’s sales have averaged an annual rate of about 16 percent over the past five years.

“The team at Mud Bay has built an incredible brand by remaining committed to helping pet owners keep their four-legged companions healthy and happy,” said Kalaygian. “From its focus on providing a best-in-class mix of healthy, natural foods and quality supplies to the relationships it has built with local pet owners to its ongoing investment in its staff at every level of the organization, Mud Bay is an extraordinary example of what an independent pet specialty chain can and should be.”

“At Mud Bay, we are passionate about pets and helping the people who love them. We are truly honored to have been selected as Retailer of the Year, which is a reflection of the passion, dedication and teamwork of our entire staff,” said Lars Wulff, co-CEO of the Tumwater-based pet retail chain. “Our job is to give dog and cat owners useful, accurate information and well-researched products that address their real needs. This award celebrates not only the good work of our employees, but also the outstanding partnerships we have built with our vendors. The result is a stellar shopping experience and, hopefully, a long-term relationship with customers and their pets.”

The company's unique approach to hiring and training was also singled out by Pet Business for its investment in employee retention. Mud Bay employs 320 people, affectionately known as "Muddies," who play an integral role in the company's success said Wulff.

The retailer's continuous improvement model starts when an employee first comes on board, but doesn't stop after their first year. Muddies – employees and managers alike — continue to receive training in products, pet health and customer service skills throughout their tenure with Mud Bay.

Even employee training reflects the fun, family-like culture the company has developed, the magazine noted.

In August, Mud Bay will host its second annual "Mudstock" event at Auburn Community College for employees, where the company offers a fun mix of education and team-building activities built around a Woodstock theme.

"We could not be more proud of this award and what it says about our company, our values and our employees," said Marisa Wulff, co-CEO and vice president of store development. "Mud Bay's employees and their passion for pets are the heart of our business. Their knowledge and understanding of our products brings tremendous value to our customers, who are seeking the safest and healthiest solutions for their dogs and cats," she said.

"At the end of the day, it's our people who make the difference for us. Anyone who shops with us knows our staff are 100 percent invested in helping pets and pet owners. That comes from a core belief in who we are and what we do," added Marisa Wulff.

"We are so proud of the positive community we've created at Mud Bay, which we believe extends to every store and every customer who visits with their pet."

Pet Business magazine will host a reception to honor the Mud Bay team during the upcoming SuperZoo trade show, which will be held July 21-23 in Las Vegas.

About Mud Bay

Founded in 1988 just outside of Olympia, Washington, Mud Bay is the Pacific Northwest's largest retailer focused on healthy, natural nutrition for dogs and cats. With 33 locations in Washington and Oregon, Mud Bay remains focused on providing a quality shopping experience for both pets and pet owners with solution-based staff. For more information about Mud Bay, visit www.mudbay.com or follow them on Twitter: @MudBay.