

## Bark Bark Backyard, LLC



Bark! Bark! Backyard provides dog daycare, boarding and training at a facility located in Lihu'e on Kauai. The business started out of necessity – “we have dogs”. What started out as a necessity, turned into a passion.

Slow and steady characterized Karen Tolodziecki's efforts. She began the “Starting a Business on Kauai” workshop provided by the Hawaii SBDC Network's (SBDC) Kauai Office. That provided an opportunity for Karen to evaluate her skill set. Then on to the business plan which was 2+ years in the making. Her SBDC advisor, John Latkiewicz, provided edits and a sounding board. As with most business plans, the business concept evolved over time. For instance, dog walking as a revenue stream dropped out over time allowing them to focus on core capabilities.

Her persistence and hard work paid off.

The end result – a \$100,000 line of credit with a \$30,000 equity stake on their part allowed them to open in the fall of 2014. As Karen and RJ Tolodziecki noted, the line of credit has enabled them to minimize financing charges. By providing sweat equity – power washing and prepping floors, putting together kennels and equipment – they've been able to keep their cash flow positive as they work through the start-up phase of the business.

What's next? Karen and RJ are looking ahead - room for a pool and, somewhere down the line, “acreage”. They are looking to educate, train

service dogs and, the big dream, to establish a no-kill shelter. Karen is pursuing training opportunities to further enhance her skills and build capability. She recently completed a training program conducted by Cesar Milan (the Dog Whisperer) and she has also been designated as an AKC approved evaluator for running the Canine Good Citizen test. The Kauai office of the HSBDC will be part of those plans moving forward.