

Pet Care Goes Mobile

Americans' love affair with animals has opened all kinds of doors for entrepreneurs and capitalists that see the growing obsession as a way to make a quick buck. Gluten-free dog treats and luxury cat towers are certainly more common today than they were just 10 years ago, and that's just the beginning.

The Rough Life

In the U.S. alone, the [ASPCA estimates](#) that there are 70 to 80 million dogs; approximately 37 percent to 47 percent of all US households are "with K9." As pets become increasingly integrated in our home lives, it makes sense that a slew of products, gadgets, and services would also arrive in the marketplace. The newest of these is available on your mobile device.

One of the greatest challenges many dog owners face is balancing a healthy schedule for the dog with the need to keep regular business hours. But that's a lot easier said than done, especially for dog owners who often need help exercising their pooches, as well as ensuring they get regular bathroom time outside. According to [this article](#), millennials in particular struggle with this issue: they prefer the jobs and the lifestyle of urban areas, but they also seek companionship from pets.

Hunter Reed, a Nashville-area native, is one such pet owner. Long hours at his job meant that his boxer, Bella, would be stuck at home for long periods of time without company. He would look for dog walkers on craigslist, but found that most were unreliable. Reed would ask his friends in desperation, but ultimately found the issue too troubling not to act.

"It got to the point where you feel bad asking your friends or neighbors," said Reed.

Pet-Sitting App

Reed's solution, in collaboration with Cody Dysert and Kris Molinari, was to create an app that connected dog owners with dog walkers using similar technology to the one used by [Uber](#) and [Lyft](#). Reed's app is called Walkio, and it's competing for market space with similar apps in the pet-sitting arena.

Walkio uses a vetting system, like Uber, that requires all walkers to undergo a background check. The app handles most of the administrative work dog walkers would normally manage on their own, including payments, appointments, scheduling, and key exchanging through lock boxes. Walkio uses basic chat features to let pet owners and walkers communicate as the walker picks up, walks, and returns the dog home.

Pricing for this service ranges from \$17 to \$75 depending on the length of time the dog needs to be cared for — which includes an overnight option.

There are several similar apps already on the market for this service, including Wag!, Swifto, Barkly, and Urban Leash. Reed hopes that by focusing on the customer services of the app, and starting in the Southeast region of the U.S., Walkio can become a market leader, at the very least in Nashville.

“The tech community in Nashville is really growing,” Reed said.

Reed and his co-founders are currently looking for funding to take the app to the next level. So far, the team has been primarily self-funded; the user base is still very small.

Will Walkio carve out a niche in the Southeast? One thing is for certain: Bella the dog is likely wagging her tail.