

Roughin' it, with TV

Campgrounds add cabins, dog parks, Web and cable access

By **CHRISTINE McCONVILLE**

Area campgrounds are preparing for an especially busy summer by adding more places to sleep, increasing recreational options and improving access in and around their facilities.

"We're doing a lot to add to our infrastructure," said Kristine Daniels, marketing direc-

HERALD HIGHLIGHT:
CAMPGROUNDS

tor at Normandy Farms Campground in Foxboro. "We're upgrading our electrical capacity and working to add cable connection to our sites, too."

There are two main reasons for the sweeping and costly spruce-ups, campgrounds owners say.

First, after all the economic upheaval in the past year, they say, people are eager to take a vacation, but want it to be as inexpensive as possible.

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RUFF-IN' IT: Christine Elliott of Georgetown runs a Great Dane, Crystal, through some agility drills at the Normandy Farms Campground in Foxboro, which added the dog park last season. Normandy is adding a yurt to the two it already has, below.

HERALD PHOTOS BY KELVIN MA



Trade group chief: Change in air

Paula Carroll runs the 83-member Massachusetts Association of Campground Owners with her husband, Jack. The Cape Cod-based Carrolls used to own Campers Haven in Dennisport. Paula Carroll spoke to Herald reporter Christine McConville last week.



CARROLL

Q Has camping changed much through the years?

A The big thing now is pets, and pet parks. People want to take their pets on vacation, and campgrounds have done a lot to accommodate them. Some have pet parks in designated areas, others have little washing area for dogs. Some parks are now allowing pets in certain cabins.

Q What are you expecting for the coming camping season?

A Everyone is expecting it to be really busy, mostly due to the economy. People still want to go on vacation and spend time with their family and friends, and camping is a very inexpensive way to do that.

Q Any other changes?

A A lot of campsites are adding wireless Internet connections for campers. People want to get out in nature, but they also want to stay connected through their computers.

Campgrounds appeal to bargain-seekers

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And camping, which promises bare-bones nightly fees and campfire cooked meals, is about the least expensive way to get away from it all.

Secondly, these days even the most rustically inclined campers expect to be able to log on to their laptop computer to check out the weather or scout for new hiking trails.

Linda Profaizer, president and CEO of the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds, said it's a national trend.

Private park owners are investing in new cabins and tepee-style yurts, as well as kid-friendly water slides and miniature golf courses.

Campgrounds in Massachusetts have seen an 8 percent increase in visitor traffic in the past two years, said Paula Carroll, executive director of the Massachusetts Association of Campground Owners.

And with the recent financial meltdown, she expects the summer of 2009 to be especially busy.

more economical ways to have a vacation," she said, "and campgrounds want to be prepared."

At Bourne Scenic Park, owners have already added five sleep-in cabins to the campground overlooking the Cape Cod Canal. Now they are replacing a long-time saltwater swimming hole with two pools.

At Pine Acres Family Camping Resort in Oakham, there's a newer splash zone for kids and 20 lake-side rental cabins.

The camping resort's owners are in the process of expanding their parking lot in preparation for summer.

And in Foxboro, where Daniels' family has run a campground since the early 1970s, the owners have added a pet-friendly yurt to the 400-site facility.

The yurts sleep six and come with a stove and a cable-ready television. A one-week summer rental costs \$1,650, she said.

"That way if people don't have camping equipment, but still want to come and camp, they can rent a yurt."