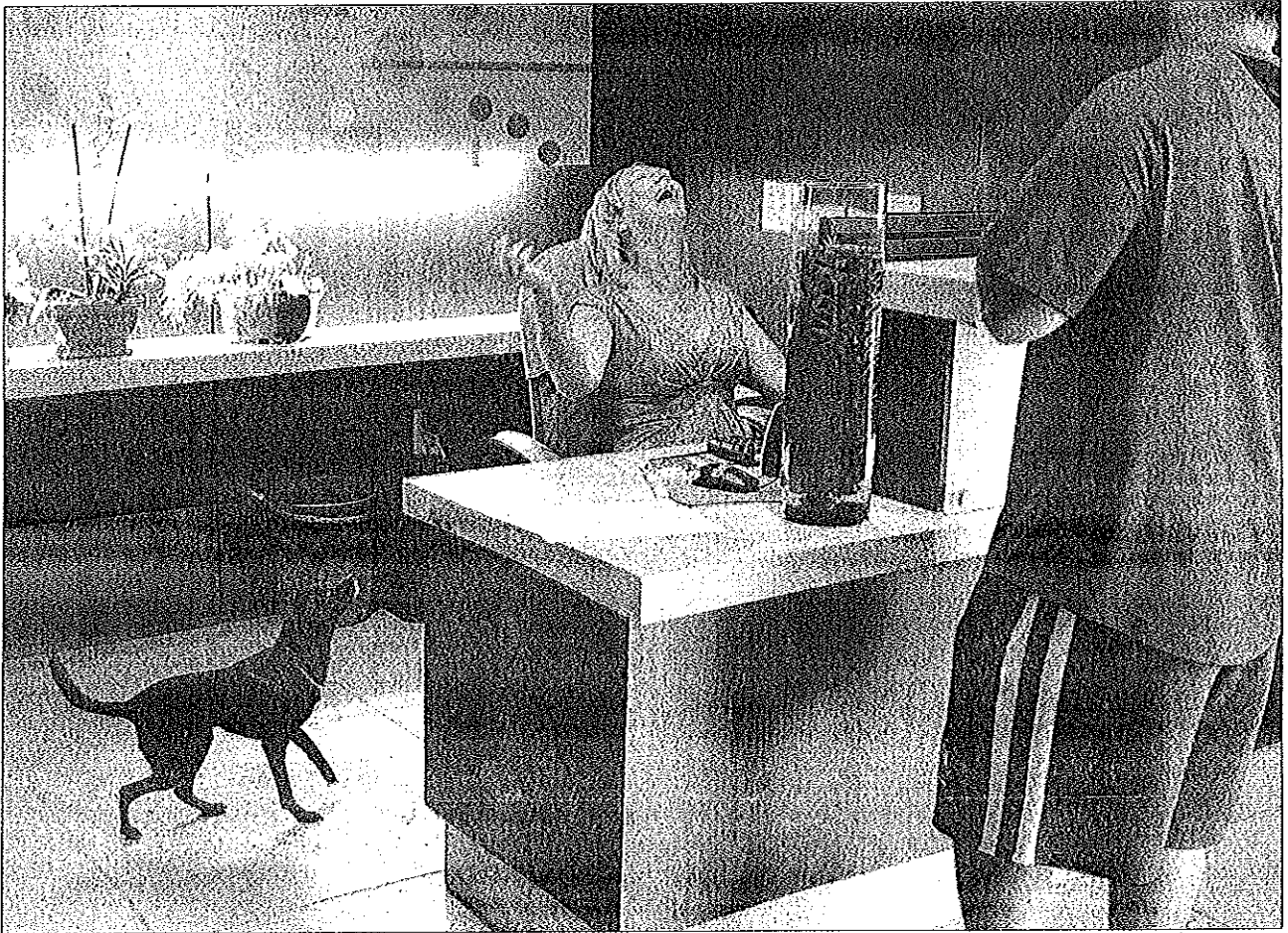


San Jose Mercury News

WONNER OF BEST CONCIERGE AWARD



LIPO CHING/MERCURY NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS

Concierge Lisa Gullicksen and her dog, Izzy, share a laugh last week with Jason Passanisi, a resident of The 88 condominiums in San Jose. Izzy, who takes naps under Gullicksen's desk, has a freshwater pearl necklace that was made for her by a resident.

AT THEIR SERVICE

Condo residents get help with everything from event tickets to salon referrals

By Linda Goldston
lgoldston@mercurynews.com

When Jason Passanisi needed help with the refreshments for his birthday party recently, he knew just the person to call.

So did Lorie Reichel-Howe, who wanted the name of a nail salon she could walk to.

Finding solutions for residents' problems is all in a day's work for Lisa Gullicksen, the concierge of The 88 high-rise condominiums in downtown San Jose.

A concierge for condominiums?

Yep, she's the only one of her kind in the South Bay, but she's so good at what she does that she recently received the Best Concierge of the Year award from the Silicon Valley Concierge Association, whose members more often work at hotels.

It's one of the amenities offered by the upscale development on East San Fernando Street, which, with 22 floors, is the tallest building between San Francisco and Los Angeles. Several residents said they quickly formed friendships with "Lisa G," as she's called by her fans and homeowners at The 88, and regularly stop by her desk in the front lobby to chat. Residents are just as devoted to Gullicksen's four-legged assistant, her



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— Lisa Gullicksen,
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condominiums in San Jose

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dog, Izzy.

"I just really enjoy helping people resolve things," said Gullicksen, 44. "I get immediate satisfaction because they're always so grateful for the things I find out for them."

Gullicksen's relationships with residents make her loom larger than her small, neat desk tucked into a small corner of the arching, elegant lobby of The 88. Izzy's bed for naps is under the desk, her food and water dish under a counter behind Gullicksen's chair.

"One of the homeowners today, who isn't really a pet person, asked if all dogs that are Izzy's breed are like her," Gullicksen said, adding that it's hard to know which breeds are in Izzy's mix. "My husband said she's the result of a Labrador retriever having his way with a Chihuahua because she loves to retrieve."

In just a few hours one day last week, five residents either stopped by to pet Izzy or throw her ever-present tennis ball.

"I always come down and visit with Lisa, who's become more of a friend, but I also come down to pet Izzy," said

Barrie Brodrick, who moved into The 88 with her husband in April after retiring as a club coach with the Ladies Professional Golf Association.

"Lisa warned me that Izzy didn't warm up right away, but we bonded and now we're official fetch partners," Brodrick said.

Before heading out for a round of golf at Silver Creek Valley Country Club, Brodrick reached out to the dog and said, "Here, Izzy, let me straighten your necklace." The freshwater pearl necklace was made especially for Izzy by a resident.

In a typical week, Gullicksen helps residents with all

kinds of recommendations — everything from catering, pet sitting and private yoga lessons to interior design and handyman referrals — and often can come up with discount event tickets and sizable coupons for restaurants downtown no matter where they're headed. If she doesn't know the answer to a tenant's question off the top of her head, she can usually pull it from Google in less than a minute.

"I pride myself on being able to deliver specials and discounts to my homeowners," she said.

She's also an ace at all things San Jose, especially

those obscure historical tidbits she'll sometimes feature in San Jose trivia contests for residents. She was born in San Jose and grew up in Willow Glen. Her father had a dental practice in downtown San Jose.

Gullicksen was a natural for the position. Previously, she had worked as an event manager for a Silicon Valley company, where her job "was to keep clients happy," and was with Parsley, Sage, Rosemary & Thyme Catering for a time. She also worked as a corporate concierge at Sun Microsystems, where she helped with travel plans for employees and negotiated to support. If she doesn't know something, she'll say, "Lorie, I'll look it up for you."

Completed in the fall of 2008, about 55 percent of The 88's 197 one-, two- and three-bedroom homes, most with floor-to-ceiling glass, have been sold. Prices range from \$300,000 to \$1 million-plus,

and some of the penthouses "are multiple millions," said spokesman Ron Heckmann.

Having Gullicksen "is a great value add for people," said Passanisi, who just completed his master's in business administration at Santa Clara University and celebrated his birthday at The 88 recently with the concierge's help. A caterer in her spare time, Gullicksen jumped right in to help prepare the food for the party when Passanisi called for help in a hurry. There's one more plus not advertised anywhere. It's repeated with a laugh by Gullicksen:

"What happens at the concierge's desk stays at the concierge's desk." get them discounts.

"Lisa has helped me with everything from where to get produce, the best places to shop and where to get my nails done," said Reichel-Howe, who moved into The 88 with her husband from Bellevue, Wash. "I had no idea there was that kind of