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Shovel squad on cleanup duty

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Inouye Jr., owner of Denver-based Turd Busters. "If you think about it, there's almost no overhead. The only thing you need are scoopers and plastic bags. The only downside is collecting funds from people ...

"It's like having a paper route: People will burn you because they know you won't take them to court over \$20."

Rubin, a Berthoud resident who runs the Poop Connection, says he's got about 170 clients in Niwot, Gunbarrel, Superior and Boulder. Once he hits the magic number of 200 — a figure he estimates will earn him \$50,000 a year — he'll drop the lawn-care business he runs on the side. Conn is less forthcoming about her client base but says she has enough to keep her busy nearly 40 hours a week.

Both Rubin and Conn charge \$20 a month for weekly poop-scooping visits; that figure goes up \$5 to \$9 for additional dogs.

For Boulder's John Hausman, that's money well spent.

"I've thought that it's a little extravagant to spend 30-some dollars a month to have someone pick up after our dogs," says Hausman, who's used Rubin for the past eight years. "But my kids wouldn't do it, and my wife wouldn't do it. If Mike didn't do it, nobody would."

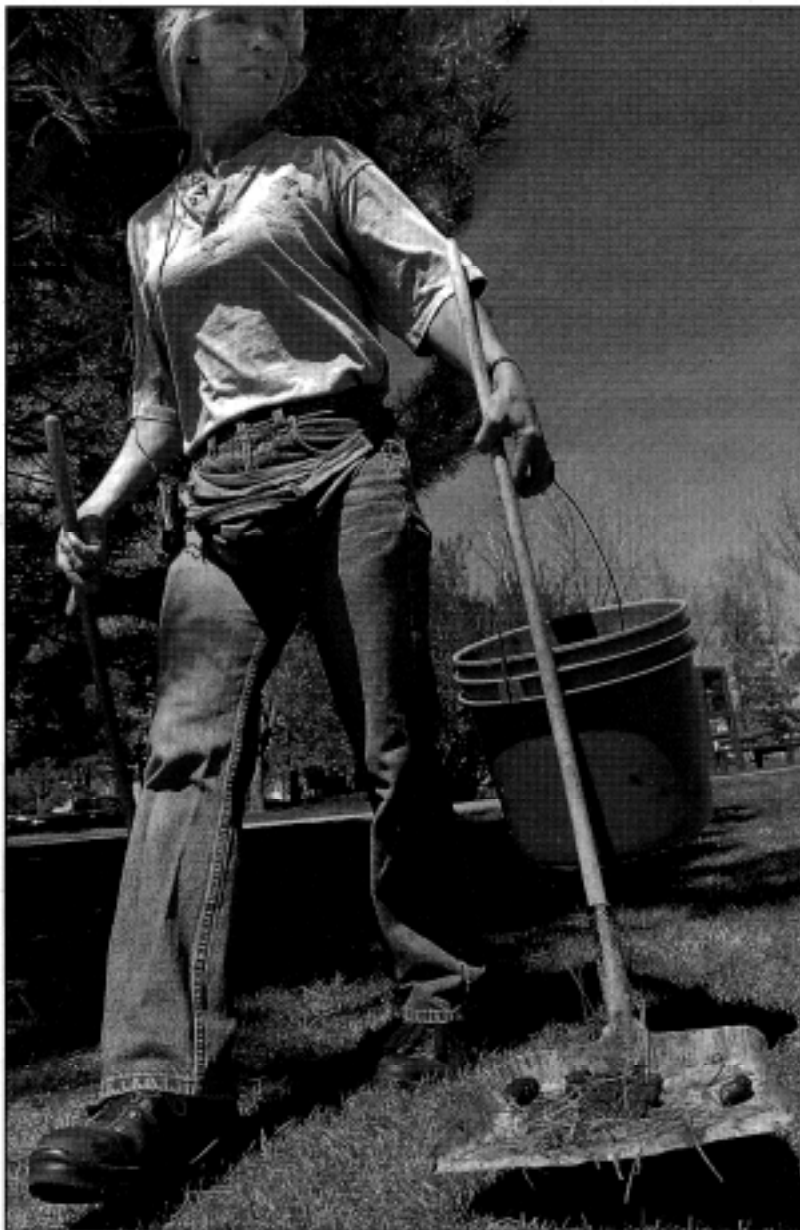
Rubin, a dog lover himself, got into the poop business in the late '80s when some of his lawn-mowing clients asked if he could clean up after their dogs as well. It was a smart idea: He could only cut lawns during the spring and summer months, but dogs do their deed year-round.

"At first I was using a little dustpan and a garden hoe," Rubin says. "I'd lean over and get real front-and-center with the business. For the first six or seven months, I really questioned myself when I went out on my rounds each week."

After a few knee surgeries, Rubin adapted his technique — he now uses a rake and a snow shovel, which means he doesn't even have to bend over — and says he now finds the dog service more physically agreeable than yardwork, and, simply put, more fun.

Conn's been shoveling dog droppings for nearly as long. She bought an existing company and client base a decade ago, and says she loves the absolute independence of the job: No boss, no employees, not even an office. Plus, she gets to hang around dogs all day.

"This work gives you a real good sense of humor," Conn



BARTON GLASSER / For the Camera

Debbie Conn, owner and operator of Scoopy Doo's pet service, cleans up dog waste at Gunbarrel Commons Park. Conn has been contracting to clean up dog waste for more than 10 years.

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John Hausman

client of Mike Rubin, who runs the Poop Connection

says. "Of course, when my kids were in high school, they hated what I did. They didn't want anyone to know what their mother did for a living. As you

can imagine, you get to hear a lot of cracks about it."

Back in Gunbarrel, Rubin unlatches a client's gate and lets himself into the back yard. A

pooper scooper's cardinal rule, he points out, is keeping those gates shut. One loose dog, he figures, and the Poop Connection is history.

Carrying his shovel, rake and a not-so-brimming bucket of canine waste, Rubin scans the snow-covered yard. There's one strip of exposed lawn near the side of the house. Sure enough, several frost-bitten brown clumps are plainly visible.

"All right!" Rubin exclaims. "We're going to have something in the shovel today!"

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