



Lisa Luckenbach with two of her dogs, LaVerne and Chai.

Photo submitted

# Lisa Luckenbach

## *Bracing for a life of helping animals*

by Maria Saint

Lisa Luckenbach didn't set out to be a business woman. She just wanted to help her dogs have a good quality of life.

Today she's the owner of WiggleLess®, a company that makes back braces for dogs and ships them all over the world. But her journey began as a labor of love for her two dachshunds, June and Henry.

"June was only 2-and-a-half when she started having some back problems — really horrendous back problems. Come to find out, she was diagnosed with IVDD (intervertebral disc disease), which is something that one in five dachshunds are diagnosed with — which is millions and millions of dogs. And it's not just dachshunds, it's several breeds that are susceptible to back problems. I come to find out that Henry, my other dachshund, was also diagnosed with IVDD, so I had two dachshunds that were diagnosed with IVDD that came from the same father, four years apart," Luckenbach said.

This was a new experience for the Ojai resident; she had owned other dogs before, but never small dogs until then. Luckenbach brought a pen inside the house to restrict the dogs' movement and allow their backs to rest, in hopes

that they wouldn't go out again.

But they did.

Desperate to do something to improve their quality of life, she came up with an idea — find a way to stabilize their backs when they're playing or walking.

Having had back problems herself and gotten some relief with back braces often found at pharmacies, Luckenbach thought she'd try to find one for dogs, too. Unsatisfied, she decided to make her own, and hired a seamstress from Patagonia to make the brace.

"I wasn't really planning on starting a business with this. I was just wanting to help my dogs. And I had them wear it for good chunks of each day and through their recovery and everything," she said.

One day, she took one of her dogs to the vet and he asked about the brace. Impressed, he recommended she consider going into business, so she could help other dogs.

"I had been a yoga instructor, I had been a pulpit minister in Ojai at the Symphony of Life Church, I'd done several different things — and running a business was one thing I had not done," she said.

After learning how to start and run a business, Luckenbach now has four part-time employees in her small Ojai business.

She's very proud of her product.

“I have them made in the Garment District in Los Angeles and they’re very high quality. And I send them all over the world because I now I

realize that there’s an awful lot of dogs that have back problems,” she said. And she really means all over the world. She recently mailed a brace to Botswana, where a yellow labrador is now enjoying a much happier life.

Owning WiggleLess® has been a rewarding experience for Luckenbach, who said she has received some powerful testimonials from owners who sing the praises of the device. “You know, some dogs don’t take to it well, but the majority do,” said Luckenbach. “And that’s why I’m still in business. So I would have to say the stories on my website of dogs being helped has been just so

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heartfelt and rewarding for me, and that’s why I’m still doing this.”

Luckenbach shared that June and Henry have both passed away — but not due to back problems. She now has three dogs, all of whom have been adopted from the Humane Society of Ventura County in Ojai: Ryder, an English cocker spaniel; LaVerne, a part schnauzer-dachshund; and Chai, a chihuahua-beagle-dachshund.

“I hope that human beings will all realize the profound significance of our animal friends and treat them with love and respect,” she said. “They balance our world and have so much to offer. They may not have a voice,

but they communicate with us always. Be kind to all beings!”

Luckenbach, a breast cancer survivor, is married to David, a camera-steadicam operator who has been in the film industry for the past 25 years. She has two daughters, Lindsay, 21 and Taylor, 17. Lindsay, an artist, is doing a quarter in Hong Kong with the Savannah College of Art and Design, and Taylor is a musician who attends El Camino High School in Ventura and will go to Nordhoff for her senior year. She also has a stepdaughter, Corina, 37, a coffee shop owner in Seattle. “My husband does quite a bit of traveling with the work that he

does, so I’m kind of the force at home,” Luckenbach said.

Other than being a registered yoga teacher and a former minister, she is also a

licensed massage therapist, but running her business is a full-time job for her. When asked how she’s able to do it all, she said it comes with living in Ojai.

“I’m so grateful for this town, for this community, for the people, for the activities that are here,” she said. “I’m a big nature lover, so I start my day with a walk and that’s kind of my meditation whether I drive to Ventura for the beach or go up into the hills, so that becomes my peace and my balance, and then I begin my day. It’s Ojai – the beauty of Ojai, the peace of it, the meditative qualities that I experience living here. ... It has shaped me.”

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