



PHOTO BY  
ROBYN AROUTY PHOTOGRAPHY

The Barkin' Doggie Family: Tobiah Utter, chief tasting officer Rocky, Anvi Shah Utter, and head "chef" (and newest addition) Zeus.

# Get Along Barkin' Doggies

When Houston attorneys **Anvi Shah Utter** and **Tobiah Utter** married in May 2008, they were sure that one special guest would not be left out of the ceremony: Rocky, a 60-pound yellow Labrador retriever. As Anvi puts it, Rocky was the impetus for their engagement. "Watching Tobiah pull out a rawhide from Rocky's mouth out of fear that our Roo would choke melted my heart. I didn't know that my loverboy could be so caring, so *sensitive*. Rocky sealed the deal."

It's a little ironic that a dog helped Tobiah, who works for Quanex Building Products Corporation, since Anvi wasn't a big dog fan at first. Anvi didn't grow up around dogs; Tobiah did. Anvi was afraid of dogs; Tobiah wasn't. Anvi didn't want a dog; Tobiah did. The couple eventually adopted Rocky and that's when Anvi fell head over heels for her canine companion. "I was very uncomfortable at first. I never really understood what Rocky needed or wanted — he doesn't talk," Anvi now laughs. "I was the one who would walk him in the morning and feed him, so I just got more comfortable with him."

Anvi and Tobiah's puppy love has translated to the Utters' current endeavor, Barkin' Doggie Biscuits, whose slogan is "You buy one. We give one." For every Barkin' Doggie Biscuit that's sold, Anvi and Tobiah give one to a shelter dog. The Utters wanted to do something similar to TOMS Shoes, which donates a pair of shoes to a needy

child for every pair sold, but for dogs. Through their volunteer work at Houston's Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care, they saw firsthand how stressful life could be for shelter dogs. And, after working in the corporate world as a tax attorney, Anvi found she longed for a different way to apply her law degree. So, she launched the gourmet dog treat company in January with Tobiah. "I just fell in love with dogs — I wanted to put my law degree to work for the betterment of dogs," she says.

And so, the Utters researched and tested dog treat recipes and researched ways to keep their product all-natural (containing only "pronounceable" ingredients) and safe. A couple of burnt batches of dog treats later, they came up with Barkin' Doggie Biscuits in three different flavors. Best of all, the treats have ingredients such as all-natural peanut butter, pumpkin, mint, and flaxseed, which are beneficial for dog bones, joints, eyes, and, most important, breath.

Barkin' Doggie Biscuits are available at three Houston stores (Heights Urban Dog, Cooper Animal Clinic, and One Green Street), as well as Fur-Get-Me-Not in Arlington, Va., and the DC Dog Shop in Washington, D.C. The owners hope to expand to more cities soon. Barkin' Doggie Biscuits currently partners with nine shelters, from Atlanta, Ga., to Seguin, and the treats are donated monthly. For more information about Barkin' Doggie Biscuits, visit [barkindoggiebiscuits.com](http://barkindoggiebiscuits.com). ✪



# DANCES WITH HORSES

**A**my Ganci just returned from spending time in Palm Beach, Fla. But the Dallas attorney wasn't soaking up the sun or relaxing on the beach — she was competing in an elite equestrian competition alongside some of the world's best riders.

Ganci, who has been riding horses since her childhood in Lexington, Ky., competes in about five large, nationally recognized shows a year — a passion she balances with a full-time law practice. "I practice a lot of equine law and it's wonderful to combine work with my own equine pursuits," she says. "My experience with horses has translated into very smooth litigation."

Ganci's favorite equestrian event is musical freestyle dressage, a competition where horse and rider perform a choreographed routine set to music. "As much as I hate to say this," Ganci admits, "dressage is a lot like a figure skating pair. You have to move in a ballet-like, artistic fashion. It's more akin to dancing with the horse." A routine set to Neil Diamond's "Forever in Blue Jeans" made Ganci — and her horse, Nike — reserve champions last year. She's currently working on choreography for a big band, swing routine to "Thanks for the Boogie Rides," which she's planning to debut on next year's equestrian circuit. But the most important part of dressage is not the music or the moves — it's the partnership between horse and rider. "It takes a ton of trust to work together," Ganci says. "You have to become a true, single unit and form a real partnership. Some horses and riders compete together for years and years."



Dallas attorney and equestrian Amy Ganci competes in the Palm Beach Derby.

Ganci's own partners are Bon Wilbo, a Hanoverian horse from Germany, and Nike, a paint horse owned by her husband. Bon Wilbo was imported two years ago, but wasn't quite suitable for his previous owner. "My trainer thought that we would be a perfect match," Ganci says. "He's quite lively, yet is a workaholic and just loves to be in the arena — I think he would walk across fire to get to the dressage arena!" Although Ganci sometimes competes with Nike, the horse is a little grumpy with anyone

but Ganci's husband, Kevin. "They have a special relationship," Ganci says. "Nike really sparkles for him." Ganci spends a lot of time with her horses. She rides every day, usually in the mornings before heading into the office. Equestrianism, Ganci says, is a great way to stay in shape. Being able to ride well requires a lot of core strength, which she works on with yoga. "I have noticed more stamina in the courtroom," Ganci says. "In fact, I don't think I've been this fit since high school."

Ganci's passion for riding has been invaluable to her law practice. "So many breeders, trainers, and farm managers are frustrated when they contact lawyers who know nothing about horses," Ganci says. "It's nice because I don't have to spend money or time getting up to speed on equine issues." But, for Ganci, the most rewarding part of being both a lawyer and an equestrian is being able to combine two things she loves: Horses and trial law. "And," Ganci adds, "I get to meet a lot of fun people." ✪

## TEXAS PEOPLE

**Mary-Olga Lovett**, co-managing shareholder in Greenberg Traurig, L.L.P. in Houston, was appointed to the Executive Women's Partnership Committee of the Greater Houston Partnership.



**Nikelle Meade**, a partner in Brown McCarroll, L.L.P. in Austin, was elected to the Envision Central Texas Board of Directors and appointed treasurer of the Real Estate Council of Austin Board of Directors.



**Yvette Ostolaza**, a partner in the Dallas office of Weil, Gotshal & Manges, L.L.P., was selected by the Dallas Women Lawyers Association as the 2009 Louise B. Raggio Award recipient. Ostolaza serves on the State Bar Board of Directors.



**Christopher Rourk**, a partner in Jackson Walker, L.L.P. in Dallas, was appointed by Gov. Rick Perry to the State Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology. The board licenses and regulates speech-language pathologists and audiologists.

