Every dog has its day at alums’ bar and restaurant

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In 2024, Samantha Chodyla (MBA ’20) (left) and Kelly Robinson (MBA ’20) founded the Dog House, a restaurant and hang-out space for people and dogs located in Mid-City.

Where can you find canines and cocktails and canine-themed cocktails?

Try the Dog House, a Mid-City gathering spot that’s part restaurant and part dog park.

Co-founded in 2024 by Kelly Robinson (MBA ’20) and Samantha Chodyla (MBA ’20), the Dog House is a restaurant and hang-out space for people and dogs alike. There’s a patio-bar for humans to grab food and drinks and an astroturf-lined play area for

dogs to fetch and frolic.

“While New Orleans is very dog friendly, there are only so many places where you can truly hang out with your dog.” Robinson says. “With the Dog House, guests can bring their dogs to the off-leash park area where they can play with other dogs, play in the splash pad, or just sit around and get pets.”

At the Dog House, four-legged companions can partake in delicacies like pupsicles and dog beer (that’s chicken, beef or pork broth served in a dog bowl), while their owners enjoy seasonal libations like a Napoleon’s Itch cocktail, an Iced Zoomies or a Stray Peach. In addition to serving food and drinks, the Dog House hosts weekly game and trivia nights, comedy showcases, sports “tail” gates, Wash and Wine Wednesdays, yoga, drag shows, live music and more.



The Dog House features an astroturf-lined play area for dogs and a bar where guests can grab food and drinks.

To keep guests safe, the Dog House operates on a membership model that requires owners to complete an online application and provide their pet’s vaccination records. Guests can choose from a $5 day pass, a $20 monthly membership or a $150 annual membership.

Robinson, who is originally from Mississippi and previously worked in sales, consulting, business development and real estate, is the mastermind behind this dog lover's destination. She says that when developing the business, she was inspired both by her labradoodle, Krewe (who she jokes is the company's president and CEO), and by her experience visiting a similar restaurant in Dallas.

"When I was in Dallas, I went to a dog park-bar all the time. When I moved to New Orleans, which is arguably more dog and drink friendly, I knew a similar concept would work here," she says. "I assumed someone would open something similar at some point, but years went by, and no one ever did."

To bring the concept to Mid-City, Robinson enlisted Chodyla, a friend and former Freeman School classmate. Right away Robinson knew Chodyla would be the perfect person to help her realize her vision.

"Sam is really the ying to my yang," Robinson says. "I bring ideas and concepts, and she's the one with real-life restaurant operations and management experience."

Originally from Virginia, Chodyla found her footing in hospitality managing at Lucy's Bar and Restaurant in New Orleans before going on to help Neal Bodenheimer and team launch Val's and Peychaud's, two of the city's most beloved neighborhood spots. Those experiences ultimately inspired her to bring her creativity and connection-driven approach to hospitality consulting and brand development.

"At first, there were a lot of logistics to figure out," Chodyla says of the Dog House venture. "We had to figure out what areas could be zoned for both a dog park and a restaurant. Eventually, we found a piece of land that just happened to be next to Take Paws, a local animal rescue. That seemed like a good sign."

Opening a space for animals and dogs posed legal and logistical challenges, but Chodyla says the skills she and Robinson gained in the MBA program made the process easier.

"Going through the MBA was a huge help when we were starting out," she says. "We were problem-solving and trying to figure out a bunch of zoning laws and legal issues, and the MBA helped us navigate that."

"The MBA program was indispensable when it came to opening The Dog House," Robinson adds. "From lessons in strategy and management to the actual

connections I made, it gave us a springboard in the skills and knowledge needed to open up this concept.”

The pair commissioned local firm Studio West Design to create a versatile indoor-outdoor facility. The resulting design eventually caught the attention of the American Institute of Architects, which in July 2025 honored the Dog House with a Small Project Merit Award for its practical design solutions and positive impact on the community.



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Since its opening the Dog House has indeed been giving back. On top of its slate of weekly events, the Dog House regularly partners with the Louisiana SPCA, Animal Rescue New Orleans, Take Paws and Zeus’s Animal Rescue to throw fundraisers and hold animal adoption events.

“Kelly has done so much work with the dog rescues in New Orleans, and she has lots of great local connections that help support our events,” Chodyla says. “Ultimately, we’re really trying to foster community in Mid-City.”

“We have customers who come back again and again,” Robinson adds. “When people become regulars, they start meeting other people, and it’s a great way to build connections.”

“You might know someone only as Chili’s mom,” Chodyla says. “But you still know and recognize them.”

And the canine companions aren’t bad, either.

“In my job, I’m playing with puppies all day,” Robinson says. “It’s a great way to make a living.”