

# Can Bowser really belong to anyone?

In Falls, you're his guardian, not his owner

By **SCOTT WILLIAMS**  
of the Journal Sentinel staff

**Menomonee Falls** — This village of 32,000 people — and at least 1,200 dogs — has become one of the nation's first communities to redefine animal ownership in a way that some say upgrades the common house pet from property to family.

Village ordinances were retooled recently to describe pet owners as "guardians" and "keepers," in what proponents say is largely a symbolic move to change public attitudes and ensure better care of animals.

A state lawmaker is considering introducing legislation that would similarly alter state laws that regard dogs and cats as mere belongings.

But the concept, touted by an animal-rights group, is drawing opposition from some national pet-owner associations that view it as a nonsensical move toward humanizing animals and usurping the rights of their owners — possibly severely

Please see **PETS, 12A**



GARY PORTER / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

**Lynn Wilde**, co-owner of Friends of Nature pet food store in Menomonee Falls, says she feels that all her pets, including Miscellaneous and Baby, her cockatiels, are part of the family. She goes along with a new village ordinance that refers to pet "guardians" or "keepers" rather than owners.