Thanksgiving in Spring!

For it is in giving that we receive.
St. Francis Of Assisi

April 2011

Seminar coming to Seattle, WA for the fourth year!
Sept. 30- Oct. 2, 2011

Once again hosted by the President of the Washington State Holistic Veterinary Medical Association, and open to all animal lovers!

To join us there, register online through the Spirits in Transition “Events” page.

Our hearts are so full, they are spilling over from joy!

It is our true delight to give thanks for all the support and appreciation for our work that we have received from many sharing the passion for animal hospice care. While it is not possible to name all here, each of them has given us what it takes to work through the everyday challenges involved in spreading the word as well as supporting those actively engaged in an animal hospice endeavor. On the next pages, meet some of our amazing volunteers and hear thanks from animal caregivers who benefitted from our helpline.

Seattle, WA:
Animal Hospice Support Network evolving

AHELP, the Animal Hospice End of Life Project has gotten off the ground as a local community effort to offer support to those facing end of life issues with their companion animal. For more info, go to www.PartnersToTheBridge.com/AHELP

Above: Otis with his mom Peggy, who later was able to hospice him after attending a Seattle seminar
Everyone who has taken Ella’s classes knows she in her teaching draws from all directions, whether medically, philosophically, religiously or otherwise. Why this quote? Was Krishna being cynical or simply a kill-joy when making this comment? Or was he alerting us to the fact that preparing for death is far from morbid, and always timely?

Farewell and Thank You, Kaya

This February Kaya, at age 13, went with his family on a skiing trip, enjoying the white wonders with all he was born to love. Mere few weeks later, when some “hot spots” did not respond to the antibiotics prescribed by the vet, a biopsy revealed that Kaya had malignant cutaneous lymphoma. “Yes, this came at us rather freight train like.”, Laura shared with us. Years back she had attended our very first weekend seminar and right then generously volunteered to be the organizer of our helpline that she now turned back to for support. Laura utilized both, conventional and holistic care options and was internally ready and committed to care for Kaya all the way to the end, but as we always suggest also located a veterinarian ready to provide in-home care as well as euthanasia in case it became needed. Thankfully, her veterinarian was willing to also dispense injectable fast acting strong pain killers we had recommended to keep on hand to be prepared in case a sudden crisis would arise.

Only nine days after the daunting diagnoses, Kaya passed in the wee hours of the morning. Laura wrote: “My dear one Kaya has crossed, in his own time. If I had not prepared with the opiates as you said, it would have been very painful for my Kaya.

Thanks so much for that. As it was I am exhausted but peaceful in his passing in my arms. I learned so much. You, the vet, my partner, my friend and my sister were certainly there when I needed you. I want to spread the word that we can do this for each other; hospice is not just for humans. This work makes us so much more as compassionate beings. Namaste, in gratitude, and for all of us, Peace.”

Dying is not per se a painful process…

…but some of the terminal diseases are. If you intend to give hospice to your animal in the future, start locating now a veterinarian who is able and willing to do what it takes in hospice care: Be available for in-home visits as well as in-home euthanasia best 24/7, and equip you with medications that may become needed before veterinary help can arrive.

Tell your friends, “Look it’s spring, the buds are sweet, the water sparkles, everyone is joyful. We are going to die.”

Krishna Mahabharata
Triple Delight:

Save a life or two and share with everyone how it can be done

Tina L.’s participation in our 2008 seminar in Los Angeles began the birthing of our online classes, as without Tina volunteering her professional skills in formatting them they still simply would not have taken off the ground yet! In the middle photo Ella and Jim came to visit Tina and her lovely family for the first time.

Last spring Tina’s dog Shayna had a seizure that lasted for 90 minutes before it could be controlled. Her veterinarian declared Shayna could only wake up to be a vegetable, and euthanasia was the humane decision to make. Tina and her partner Brian thanked her for the advice yet insisted on taking Shayna home - alive. The photo on the left shows Shayna after her fully recovering within four days of most dedicated care, with her daddy Brian K.

Not too long after that challenge Ella asked Tina if she could possibly foster little Timmy (photo on right), who was dropped off at a veterinary clinic for euthanasia since he was paralyzed behind. The rest is history. Within weeks Timmy was neither paralyzed any longer nor available for adoption! He had charmed his way into everyone’s heart of both two and four-legged family members. Yet another happy end!

Since we wrote this article, beloved Brewski, Tina’s most senior dog companion, bid his Farewell to us, not without giving her much more than the last kiss she hoped for. Blessed journey to you, Brewski.

How about Italiano?

Elena Grassi makes sure her fellow Italians can take the animal hospice online classes in their native language!

Also a participant of the 2008 Los Angeles group, Elena first translated some of Ella’s articles into Italian. She could have stopped there but felt strongly that she wanted the Online Classes too to be available in her native language. Since then she has spent many hours translating session after session right before they get published. Elena also had her first own animal hospice help line case in Italy and volunteers for human hospice as well. Thank you, Elena!
More Volunteer Cheer!

Meet several more of those very special people who made it possible for us to accomplish what we did in the past year!

Madeline W., CA

Having given first extensive special needs care and then hospice to her German Shepherds Gunner and Ben, Madeline is ever ready to support spreading the word in countless ways, only one of which is proofing everything Ella writes, whether it be articles, conference proceedings, online class text or surveys, even this newsletter!

Kathleen C., AZ

Having caught passionate fire after hospicing her sweet dog Tali and soon after her kitty Curi, Kathleen has been unstoppable in applying her exhibitor experience with precious stones to staffing each of our pet expo booths. She ventured on to hold a Spirits in Transition booth for us on her own, supported by our dear friend Ken.

Jeanne H., CA

Jeanne is the second person on the left in the happy circle of volunteers who staffed America’s Family Pet Expo booth. Jeanne hospiced two most lovely dog companions after attending the Spirits seminar. Both Libby and Nani passed peacefully on their own. Jeanne greatly enhanced our booth by contributing awesome photo enlargements as decoration. The one of Bunny’s dog Swany made us think she just came back to life! Jeanne also evaluated the results of the survey we put out to visitors of the pet expo.

Anne H., CA (coincidentally same last name) to the very left is the mom of our most precious movie star Cassie! Anne generously allowing us to video record the intimate experience of Cassie’s passing under hospice care has greatly contributed to empowering especially those weekend seminar participants unfamiliar with the natural dying process to offer hospice to their own animal loved one.

Rebecca M., CA

Rebecca had to say Good Bye to her beloved Sasha this past year, her darling, affectionate and quite communicative greyhound lady. Rebecca has been a godsend by being the one to respond consistently, kindly and personably to all our website information requests, and with that has often kept the straw from breaking our camels’ backs!
People come to pet expos to shop, adopt and have fun. Still, 133 people took their time to fill out a brief survey, revealing some things that come as a surprise may be not to you, but to some who need to know.

“Do you believe that animals have as strong a will to live as people do?”

2010 SIT POLL RESULTS (133 participants)
America’s Family Pet Expo & Phoenix Pet Expo:

95.5% YES

“I wished euthanasia was available to people, too” is a not uncommon response by people who for the first time hear about animal hospice.

Having control over ending one’s own life can be comforting, and has been offered in Oregon since 1997 with the Death with Dignity Act. Terminally ill patients can take lethal medications if desired. The percentage of dying people that will utilize this option is considerably less than 1%. “Do you believe that animals have as strong a will to live as people do?” was one of the questions we asked visitors of our booth at pet expos: 95.5% said “yes”.

Telling Numbers…things you knew and things you would still like to know!

Last year we went to two large pet expos to make people aware of animal hospice care being an option. We asked those who were willing to take the time to answer a few written questions. Here are some of the results:

• 87.2% were familiar with hospice care for humans

• 75.2% did not know hospice can be done for animals (glad we were there!)

• 95.5% think that their animal has as much a will to live as us humans (This is particularly interesting to contemplate in connection with the info on the lower left, and the often prevalent concern that the animal may suffer if we don’t euthanize)

• 95.5% would like to know how to support their animal through the end-of-life so euthanasia would hopefully not be necessary

• Out of those who already had a personal experience of an animal being euthanized, 30.5% marked they had a bad experience (This one came as a sad surprise to us and led us to add a whole section of questions on euthanasia practices to the veterinary survey described below)

Things you still would like to know!

You may remember us asking you some time ago what you would like to know from veterinarians when it comes to end-of-life care. Last year Ella posed close to 50 to-the-core questions to fellow veterinarians at two conferences where she was a speaker, the convention of the AVMA (the largest organization of the veterinary profession) and the conference of the AHVMA (for holistic veterinarians).

Return rates were remarkable and we are so grateful to all who took the time to fill out this extensive and first-of-its-kind survey. It doubtless will greatly help illuminate for the profession what changes are needed in end-of-life care - ONCE the survey has been evaluated. The received cost estimates show we are tens of thousands of dollars and/or many volunteer hours away from knowing these pertinent outcomes. If you can take part in making this happen by donating, fundraising or evaluating, please contact us at spiritsintransition@verizon.net or call Bunny at (805) 598-6496.
Thanks from the Help Line to Bunny & all helpline & website volunteers

BB
“Your website the stories and the kindness you brought to me during BB’s last few days enabled me to get through the transition.”
- Linda G., Lincroft, NJ  cat “BB”

Gizmo
“First off, thank you for this wonderful website and your support. I often feel like people don’t understand the amount of care we give our babies. It helps to know you value and respect their lives as much as my husband and I do.”
- Sara J., Lake Forest Park, WA  dog “Gizmo”

Henry
“Thank you so much for taking time to talk me through that last day and for your gentle and kind support. I so appreciate what you do, and I am so grateful that Henry had the kind of death that he wanted, and for what it taught me, as well.”
- Nancy W., Prescott, AZ  cat “Henry”

Sheba
“Thank you so very much for your kindness and support during Sheba’s last days. I cannot tell you how much it meant to me, my husband and Sheba. We are so glad we did what we did.”
- Lori F., Niles, MI  dog “Sheba”
Last but not least!

We give big THANKS to those who have made our WEBSITE what it is today, and to our most generous web host Jesse who waived our monthly fee ever since he discovered what our work is about.

We are LOOKING FOR YOU if you have experience in web maintenance and/or design, and have some time to gift us with.

Can you help?

E-mail received in April 2011 from Denise in Australia:

“Thank you, my beautiful Bell is ill and your website alone has helped me.”

Being a proud mom to Samson, the Golden man to the left, Ella wishes to share that he has become certified as a therapy dog last year.

Samson since has been a delight to many Hospice of the Valley patients in Phoenix, AZ. Ella also very much enjoyed taking the human volunteer training. In the Spirits in Transition approach to hospice for animal family members we orient ourselves on high quality care as it is given to human loved ones.

A great Thank You to all who make it possible for adult and children patients anywhere to stroke a sweet nose, pet a soft fur, and receive the love radiating from those beautiful eyes.

PS: And no, Samson is not overweight (anymore)!