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CVMA Pet Loss Helpline Celebrates 30 Years of Service

Chicago Veterinary Medical Association offers helpline and pet loss support group

The death of a beloved animal friend undoubtedly is a significant loss to its human companion. In recognition of this fact, the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) provides free grief resources for Chicagoland pet owners and families, including its Pet Loss Helpline and its support group, “Wings.”

The Pet Loss Helpline is operated by trained, compassionate volunteers who retrieve messages from grieving families and return their call to offer support through active listening and providing support materials and referrals for further assistance when needed. Pet owners can contact the helpline and leave a message by calling, 630-325-1600.

The Human-Animal Bond Committee was formed in 1992 with the purpose of creating a resource for people grieving for the loss of their pets. It was the brainchild of Dr. Mary Baukert to form The CVMA Pet Loss Helpline with veterinary association members. Dr. Emil Baukert has been coordinator of the Helpline since the beginning when they took their first call on July 1st, 1993. The Human-Animal Bond Committee members aided in the formation of the University of Illinois Careline and their framework was used to develop the guidelines for starting helplines for the AVMA.

The “Wings” Pet Loss Support Group, which was started in 2001 as an extension of the helpline, meets via Zoom the first Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm. The group is led by a licensed psychologist who guides participants in working through their grief. While there is no fee for the service, donations, which are tax-deductible, are appreciated and gladly accepted. Interested support group participants need to contact Dr. Linda Harper at linda@drlindaharper.com for more details about joining the group.

“Your veterinary caregivers observe the depth of the bond between pets and their people and are very much aware of the pain that families experience upon the loss or anticipated death of a beloved animal,” explained Dr. Marina Jaworsky, CVMA Board President. “CVMA is honored to help grieving pet families by providing helpful resources for them to work through the understandable sadness that unfortunately comes with the loss of a pet.”

“I would encourage anyone who is struggling with pet loss to take advantage of the great resources that CVMA provides,” said Ray McGury, CVMA Executive Director. “The high-quality, complimentary resources that CVMA offers can provide immeasurable help and essential coping mechanisms for people experiencing one of the saddest moments in their lives.”

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About the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association: Chicago Veterinary Medical Association is a professional network with a longstanding tradition that connects more than 1,000 veterinarians with comprehensive resources that support their continued development as champions of animal health while encouraging the fostering of the human-animal bond.

About the Chicago Veterinary Medical Foundation: The CVMF, established in 2009, is a 501^c(3) charity that works with Chicagoland veterinarians to provide financial assistance to pet families in need by helping with the costs of their pet’s urgent, unexpected medical and surgical bills. The Foundation’s work plays a vital role in strengthening the human-animal bond by helping sick and suffering pets get well again.