



Birmingham Cats-Only Practice Offers Cat Hospice Program

by Stephanie Newman



Laura Kramek and Dr. Houlihan

Cats are living longer than ever as a result of constant technological advances and increasing veterinary specialization. Because pets are considered to be family members, hospice programs for terminally ill pets offer an alternative to standard practices of euthanization. Instead of treatment to cure an illness, hospice care gives comfort care to alleviate pain and suffering for humans and cats.

Cats and their guardians in the metropolitan Detroit area have access to hospice and end-of-life care provided by The Cat Practice in Birmingham, Michigan. Their program is the first of its kind in Michigan, and is under the direction of veterinary hospice nurse, Laura Kramek, Licensed Veterinary Technician, who has worked at The Cat Practice since 1993. The Cat Practice's hospice program began in 2011 when clients asked for alternatives to standard end-of-life care. Their program is modeled upon human hospice that seeks to lessen physical discomfort and to provide caring end-of-life experiences for both cats and their families.

The Argus Institute at Colorado State University began its veterinary hospice program in 2004 with the assistance of local practitioners and Front Range Community College, Hospice, Inc. of Larimer County. Colorado State University's program is free to those who live within a 30 mile radius of Fort Collins, Colo. They focus on "caring, not curing" with the goals of pets leaving this world in a "familiar home environment." They provide "pain control and physical comfort" to pets while giving educational and emotional support to pet parents. The Colorado State University veterinary hospice program staff are all specially trained student volunteers at their veterinary teaching hospital. They do not, however, perform euthanasia.

In an April, 2012 article in the Huffington Post, despite current economic difficulties, pet parents find the money to pay for their pets needs and that includes end-of life care. The International Association of Animal Hospice and Palliative Care states that, "through appropriate care and the promotion of a caring community sensitive to their needs, patients and their families may be free to attain a degree of mental and spiritual preparation for death that is satisfactory to them." Pet parents who face their cat's imminent death may wish to discuss their options with a veterinary professional. An additional resource is the Nikki Hospice Foundation, a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization that promotes veterinary hospice care to terminally ill or dying pets in the comfort of their own home. They maintain a database of hospice veterinary and mental health professionals as well as guidelines for veterinary hospice care.

The Cat Practice is located at 875 S. Worth, Birmingham, MI. For more information, call 248-540-3390 or visit TheCatPracticePC.com.

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