



Thursday, May 31, 2012

Veterinary Hospital Starts Michigan's First Pet Hospice To Care For Aging And Terminally Ill Pets

In 2007, when my Angel Bobo was facing the final days of his life, just prior to turning 18, (he passed one day after his 18th birthday), I was faced with many agonizing decisions. Wanting to preserve his dignity and lessen his suffering, and after his communication to ME "that yes it was time," (which he told me AFTER I held him and told him I would be ok, and to please not worry. Bobo's life was spent protecting me and I knew he would never cross the bridge without knowing I would be ok), I chose to help him cross the bridge in the safety and love of our home, on our couch.

Bobo had been ill with feline heart issues and deteriorating kidney function for two years prior to the day I made the heartbreaking decision. In one sense, I was blessed that his worst days didn't go on for months, so had a Pet Hospice existed at that time I am not sure it would have been a necessity for me. Bobo had become deaf, he was inactive, his breathing labored, my formerly "I-live-for-my-Mama-and-for-food" cat had stopped eating. My beloved Bobo no longer had a good quality of life. Had things been different and Pet Hospice existed, I might have looked into it.



The Cat Practice hospice in Birmingham, Michigan, will offer end-of-life care, modeled after human hospice that alleviates physical discomfort and provides a caring end-of-life experience for the pet and the pet's family. Like human hospice, The Cat Practice hospice is for families whose pets face an incurable condition, but can still enjoy quality of life. Instead of curative treatment, pets receive palliative, or comfort care, that includes medication for pain and discomfort, physical affection, favorite foods and extra time with family

members.

In 2011, Troy resident Maryann Clark faced a difficult decision when her 17-year-old brown tabby cat Rocky was diagnosed with heart disease, and in 2009 when her 16-year-old calico Purrdy developed kidney failure and heart disease. For many pet owners with seriously ill or aging pets, euthanasia has been the only choice.

Clark instead wanted her felines to live as long as possible assuming that they were still active and could enjoy good quality of life.



Pets in the hospice program receive care at home under the direction of The Cat Practice **veterinary hospice nurse Laura Kramek**. Families are taught how to administer care and have a regular pipeline in to Kramek for guidance and support. They also get reduced pricing on office visits and pet pain medications. **Psychologist Dr. Camille Greenwald**, who works with The Cat Practice, is available for grief counseling. Future plans include a memory wall on the hospital's website for remembering deceased pets.

"Cats are living 20 years and more," says Kramek. "Conditions once considered untreatable – kidney failure, heart disease, diabetes, thyroid disease – can all be managed today." To help pet owners prepare for caring for an aging pet, **The Cat Practice will hold parts 3 and 4 of a 4 part workshop series, Pet Hospice Care (June 13), and Greenwald on Pet Loss and Grieving (June 27). Donation is \$10 per workshop or \$25 for the series with proceeds going to The Cat Practice's Rufus Memorial Feline Fund for cats in need. To register, go to www.thecatpracticepc.com or call 248-540-3390.**

"Emotionally speaking, losing a pet is not very different than losing anyone else we love," says Dr. Greenwald. "Therefore, having some understanding of the normal grieving process and commonly associated feelings can help people navigate their way through what is a painful but very natural and normal life process."

"Pets touch people's lives and hearts in so many ways," says Kramek. "Today, saying good bye can be a time to continue this bond. As long as a pet is comfortable and still enjoys quality of life, pet families have choices and that is what we want to give them."

While The Cat Practice just recently formalized its hospice program, the hospital has been providing clients and their felines with options for end-of-life care for a number of years. In fact, it was clients asking for alternatives that led to the program.



About Laura Kramek

Kramek is a veterinary hospice nurse and licensed veterinary technician (LVT) with a special interest in geriatric pets, pet hospice and end-of-life care. She works closely with pet families to help them know all of their options. Kramek has been with The Cat Practice since 1993 and is a graduate of Michigan State University. She and her husband live in Dearborn Heights with their two cats Epoisses and Pinot.

About Camille Greenwald, PhD.

Dr. Greenwald is a licensed clinical psychologist. She has been in private practice in Birmingham for 20-plus years, and has served as a consultant at William Beaumont Hospital. She is a graduate of Wayne State University and the University of Detroit and is also a member of the American Psychological Association and the Michigan Psychological Association. Dr. Greenwald, a life-long cat owner, shares her home with her family and three cats: Caspurr, Henry and Bill who is geriatric.

About The Cat Practice

The Cat Practice, Michigan's first cats-only veterinary hospital, opened in 1981. Open seven days a week and evenings, The Cat Practice provides advanced preventative and medical care with an emphasis on early detection to **help cats live longer, better and healthier lives**. Located at 875 South Worth in Birmingham, Michigan, The Cat Practice cares for feline purebred and mixed breeds from around southeastern Michigan. For information go to www.thecatpracticepc.com or call **248-540-3390**

I am interested in hearing your thoughts. If a Pet Hospice existed in your area, would it be something that you would consider?

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