

# END NOTE

BY DORRY BLESS



When people ask me what I do, I tell them that I am a celebrant. Usually a crease forms around their eyebrows, and their jaws tighten. Then I explain to them that a celebrant helps their clients create meaningful and satisfying ways to celebrate and mark personal achievements, transitions and life events. I add that weddings, milestone anniversary celebrations, new home blessings and funerals are among the ceremonies that I perform. A look of recognition crosses their faces.

I continue and tell them that one of the reasons I chose to study celebrancy was to be able to offer funerals for animals and provide a sacred space for animal lovers to openly grieve and memorialize their animal companions.

At the mention of this, their eyes soften. Invariably,

Since many pet cemeteries and funeral homes are hundreds of miles and even states away, you can serve and support your customer base right in your very own community. Host an animal memorial service in your funeral home. Invite your local veterinarian, rescue groups and shelters to participate along with your community members. Call your local ASPCA or the Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement ([www.aplb.org](http://www.aplb.org)) and see if they have a local pet loss bereavement counselor who might assist. Maybe a representative from a pet cemetery or crematory can be present to provide information on their services.

This might be an opportunity to enter into a collaborative business relationship. Bring in a celebrant to

# Celebrating **the Love** of a Pet

they relate a story about the loss of their dearly loved cat, or the heart wrenching decision to euthanize their dog, or the tragic, untimely death of their animal friend – unquestionably a beloved family member.

By the time our conversation ends, I feel like I knew Amos, Elmer or Buddy well. Still, others share that they anticipate an imminent loss and feel reassured by the prospect of honoring their pet's life with an end of life tribute when the time comes.

The origin of the word “animal” means to have the breath of life, from the Latin *anima*. It is related to *animus* which means of mind, spirit. Our animal companions breathe life into our very own existence and reflect the fundamental nature of our own spirit. They bring us closer to our own truth. For many people, their relationship with their pet is pure and uncomplicated. They comfort us as well as show us the absolute joy of being in the present moment. They are a window to our own soul, and they can guide us gently through our own feelings of loss and grief while at the same time help us to explore our painful relationship with death and mortality.

design and perform a memorial ceremony, along with soothing rituals, for your town's beloved pets. Encourage your attendees to bring photos of their animal companions.

You can also create a temporary animal memorial exhibit. I am certain that you will be pleased by the response to this event and the goodwill that it will generate toward you and your business. It is an opportunity for adults and children alike to enter your funeral home at a time when they are not wracked with grief, and they can appreciate the significant role you play in the community. Spending contemplative, reflective time honoring their pet and their life together in a supportive group setting is a healing act. •

*Dorry Bless is a celebrant in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York. She earned her certificate from the Celebrant USA Foundation & Institute. She may be reached at [blessed@ptd.net](mailto:blessed@ptd.net) or by phone at 908-995-0049. Or visit her web site at [www.circleoflifeceremonies.com](http://www.circleoflifeceremonies.com)*