

**NEWS**

# Hospice care is not just for humans

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When faced with end of life issues, many people turn to hospice for support and guidance.

If the loved one is a pet, however, options are few and far between. In fact, such support was nonexistent less than a decade ago until Tammy Wynn founded Angel's Paws in Blue Ash. Her hospice care for animals was a first of its kind business in the nation, she said.

The clientele is as varied as people's choice of pets. Everything from chickens and ferrets to dogs and cats have crossed the 'Rainbow Bridge' with the support of Angel's Paws. Services include: pet hospice, in-home euthanasia, private cremations, funeral/memorial services and grief counseling.

The focus of Wynn's service is to provide support and necessary resources to pet owners as they prepare for the death of their fur or feather baby. This is the very service she would have liked in 2003 when faced with the failing health of Cagney, one of two 18-year-old cats she had at the time.

Cagney's death followed by the 2004 death of her father, Richard Carpenter, had a profound impact on Wynn. The support the family received from hospice during Carpenter's last days was "incredible," Wynn said. They gave him medications to manage pain and other symptoms and provided the family with education and support.

It was at this point Wynn had a life-changing, religious experience.

Her father died on April 4. The following day, April 5, while driving to pick up his ashes a thought was "put in her heart," Wynn said. She wanted to do animal hospice.

"The idea was divinely orchestrated," she said. "I actually had a purpose in my life. And it happened that the greatest loss of my life was my greatest gain... So my dad is with me every single day I'm here and so is Cagney. This is the reason I was put on this earth."

The path to her current destination was not easy. To learn more about hospice care she worked a few years at Hospice of Cincinnati. In order to better understand animal diseases she attended veterinarian technician school.

On the sixth anniversary of her father's death, Wynn opened Angel's Paws. Now seven years later, Wynn still believes the business was "divinely orchestrated."

"Where we are, after bringing up something from dirt that didn't exist before, for the first time we're fully staffed," Wynn said. The staff includes a veterinarian whose services are available 24/7. The veterinarian is not there to necessarily replace the family pet doctor but rather to supplement. Angel's Paws partners with 85 area veterinarians for end-of-life care.

With a full staff, Wynn said she's able to focus on growing her business. She envisions expanding animal hospice throughout Ohio. Currently Angel's Paws' service territory is any location within 30 miles of the office at 11341 Grooms Road with a hard line at 40 miles.

Wynn is also involved in an effort to introduce hospice care to a larger audience through involvement with the International Association for Animal Hospice and Palliative Care. She is the chair of the organization's Education and Research Committee.

Since opening Angel's Paws, Wynn and team have helped more than 4,000 families including Sami Smith and her canine friend Lexi, both of Madeira. Smith was one of Wynn's first clients signing on shortly after reading an article in *The Enquirer*. Because Lexi had a heart condition, Smith wanted the support of hospice care to be prepared for end of life issues.

With the help of Angel's Paws and Angel's Watch (the nonprofit arm of Angel's Paws), Lexi crossed the 'Rainbow Bridge' in December, Smith said. Depression, sadness, loneliness and grief have set in, she said. She's working through the emotions by attending the free support group offered at Angel's Paws.

Like with human hospice care, the support group is free and open to anyone, Wynn said.

More information about Angel's Paws is available at [www.angelpaws.com](http://www.angelpaws.com) or follow them on Facebook at Angel's Paws, LLC.