



More Funeral Homes Offer Pet Cremations

Courtesy of: Peter Frost : New York Times News Service

When India Housanman's cat Fuzzy, and miniature dachshund, Gypsy, got sick and had to be euthanized, the Hilton Head Island resident turned to an unlikely place for the arrangements: a local funeral home.

"My pets are part of my family," Housanman said. "They've been a big part of my life, and it's nice to know they're at my house instead of in the middle of some landfill." Now, the remains of Fuzzy and Gypsy are displayed discreetly in urns at her home.

Housanman, who lives with her husband, Douglas, five dogs and three cats, contacted The Island Pet Cremation Services, operated by The Island Funeral Home and Crematory on Hilton Head, to handle the remains of her deceased pets.

Since the funeral home began offering pet cremations nearly two years ago, the service has grown in popularity, said Sheri Richardson Stahl, who owns and operates the business with her father, Allen.

Today, the funeral home takes care of arrangements for about 15 pets a month, Stahl said, a number she expects to continue to grow. "We're all pet owners or pet lovers here, so it seemed like a natural fit," Stahl said. "Customers know that we're going to provide that extra level of personal care they can't get anywhere else. We understand how important pets are to people, and we help make the grieving process as easy for them as possible.

Pet cremation has been around for several years, but as Americans increasingly treat their pets as treasured members of the family, the demand for pet death-care services is accelerating.

Even traditional funeral homes across the country are investing in animal crematories. Paul Rayhill, president of Matthews Cremation Division in Florida, one of the nations' largest providers of cremation equipment, said pet cremation sales have become a much more significant segment of business within the last five years.

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Donations to Environment, Animal Groups Dip in 2008

Americans donated \$6.6 billion to animal and environmental organizations in 2008, down 5.5 percent from the previous year, the Giving USA Foundation reported.

Donations to all causes totaled \$307.7 billion in 2008, compared to a record \$314.1 billion in 2007. The annual report on philanthropy was researched by the Center of Philanthropy at Indiana University and appeared in the publication Giving USA.

Animal/environmental donations represented 2 percent of total estimated giving in 2008. "With the United States mired in a recession throughout 2008, there was not doubt in anyone's mind that charitable giving would be down," said Del Martin, chairman of the Giving USA Foundation. "However, what we find remarkable is that individuals, corporations and foundations still provided more than \$307 billion to causes they support, despite the economic conditions.

For more info. visit
www.givingusa.org



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