

■ Regional News

Event will remember the lives of beloved best friends

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ST. CATHARINES — When people lose a loved one, it leaves a hole in their daily life.

The same applies when it comes to the loss of a pet, said the organizers of an event taking place Sunday, June 12 at the St. Catharines Museum.

“It wasn’t just a cat, it wasn’t just a dog, it was a family friend,” said Julie Proulx, owner of Pets at Peace in the Garden City. She has teamed with grief consultant, educator and author Marybeth Haines to organize the World Pet Loss Memorial Day celebration vigil at the museum.

“It’s the perfect day to be able to honour and celebrate their lives,” Haines said.

Both women said that grief services for pet owners are in short supply in Niagara. It was one of the reasons why Proulx opened her business on Lake Street in St. Catharines. She was formerly a funeral director and still helps families through her work with Davidson Funeral Home in Port Colborne.

“I receive calls looking for that support,”



Grief consultant Marybeth Haines, left, and Julie Proulx, owner of Pets at Peace, have organized a World Pet Loss Memorial Day celebration vigil at the St. Catharines Museum's Lockview Lounge.

**Richard Hutton/
Staff Photo**

Proulx said.

Both women have experienced the loss of a long time pet. For Haines, the death on Christmas Day 2011 of her 20-year-old cat named Kitty hit her hard.

“I had experienced a lot of loss, including pets and people,” Haines recalled. “I remember it was fortunate that it was that day. If it had happened on Christmas Eve or Boxing Day, neither my husband nor I would have been there.”

The couple had come home to find Kitty

“collapsed” and not moving. Doing their best to take care of her, Kitty seemed to recover but later on that night, Kitty’s condition deteriorated.

She was taken to the Niagara Emergency Veterinary Clinic where she passed away.

Proulx, meanwhile, experienced the loss of her pet, a Maltipoo (Maltese-poodle cross) named Molly.

“Two weeks after we put Molly down, we moved,” Proulx said. “(In the new house) we’d

come home and we’d find little puffs of white fur and she had never lived there. It brought us comfort.”

Haines has written two books on grieving the death of a pet — *The Power of Pets* and *From Empty to Empowered* — and will be giving away copies to people who attend the vigil.

Pets at Peace offers pet owners services ranging from cremation to sympathy cards for pet loss. Proulx also speaks with grieving owners one-on-one.

“Talking is so therapeutic,” Proulx said.

And that makes the vigil so important, she added.

“People only want to have the opportunity to talk openly, remember their pet and pray.”

Haines said anyone who plans on attending the vigil are welcome to bring photos of their pets.

“Doing this will bring the community together,” Haines said.

The vigil takes place from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the museum, located at 1932 Welland Canals Pkwy. in the Lock 3 complex. The vigil, which will take place in the Lockview Lounge, will feature a memorial ceremony followed by fellowship and refreshments.

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