

Northwoods Humane Society – Deanna Persson, President

I received a call from my son last Monday morning and his voice was so filled with anguish and sorrow. He emotionally shared with me that his cat “Miss Flack” was dying. We talked with the right side of our brain. He knew that her days were number. She was about 17 years old. Miss Flack’s health had been failing. But the final moments seemed to come so fast. The night before she had eaten well and was her usual chatter box self.



Fortunately, Chris’ vet was able to see Miss Flack right away. The vet said that her organs were failing and Chris chose to say good bye to her. The vet let him hold her throughout the process. He said they were kind and supportive. He chose to have her cremated.

Chris is a single man. Miss Flack was always there to greet him when he returned from work or play. She was a talker and a snuggler. Miss Flack used to belong to a young woman that rented from a friend of Chris’. She had three cats and a dog. Sadly, she fell on the ice 7 winters ago, hit her head and died. Her parents came from South Dakota and took the dog back with them. They did not want the cats. So three of the guys that were friends each took a cat and Chris took Miss Flack. She was the oldest cat and she was going blind. So many of the animals Chris grew up with were old and disabled – so that was no problem for him. Mike, my husband, Chris and I have shed many tears over the years for the loss of pets and family members. As a family, we will honor Miss Flack with a memorial gift to the NHS Purple Cat Van Free Spay and Neuter project. This project is scheduled for June 2 at the Northwoods Humane Society and will provide free spay and neutering for owned, shelter, or feral cats.

I read an article by Dani Hart of Eterneva about pet loss and want to share some of it with you. “With 67% of U.S. households having a pet, we can say that a majority of us will encounter the joys and wonder a pet can bring to our households and our communities. This means that, unfortunately, a majority of us have to learn how to grieve the loss of a pet and find ways to celebrate their remarkable life when they are no longer with us.

Now more than ever, pets hold a crucial role in our home and society. And if you’re anything like us, a pet may have helped you get through some of the hardest parts of living during a wild time in history.

There are so many benefits of having a pet when things get tough. For depressed people, a pet can give them meaning and a will to live. For anxious people, a pet can help soothe their nervous system and nip an anxiety attack before it happens. And with over 200,000 animals registered as emotional support dogs, the number of pets who offer their owners support is growing and becoming more recognized.

In addition to supporting our mental health, pets can help us regulate our nervous system, get regular exercise, and create a routine... all of which will help us live happier lives.

According to the recent research published in the journal Circulation, dog ownership was associated with a 24-percent reduced risk of death from any cause among the general public, and a 33 percent

lower risk of death among heart attack survivors who live alone. So yes, having a pet can also help us live longer and healthier lives.

Pets need nothing, except their human (and maybe some treats), to be happy. Their role is to make their loved one happy. Therefore, when this unconditional love is no longer a part of the everyday, there's a huge void.

Possibly it was the pet who was the support during an illness, a pet who provided the listening ear during a divorce, or the pet was the only source of love for a home-bound person.

There's no language that's spoken, except there's a communication that's fully understood between pet and pet parent.

When we take on the joys of having a pet, we also take on the responsibility of their full life, which includes the grief that comes with their loss. Now more than ever, people are flipping the script and remembering just how special their pet is to them, the fond memories and routines they shared, and turning their pain into something beautiful as they approach the next chapter of their life without their remarkable pet.

Why is grieving the loss of a pet so painful? Whether it's those that don't understand the relationship people have with a pet and the human-animal bond, or it's the age-old statement of "it's just a dog/cat," some people will dismiss or minimize the emotions associated with grieving the loss of a beloved pet. However, it's big, and it's real.

Pet grief is a real thing. It is not something to be diminished just because it was not a human being. Pets are so important to us, and they are such big parts of our lives that when you lose a pet, it truly is like losing a family member. And if you need time to grieve, grieve.

Once Chris brings Miss Flack's ashes home, he will begin the search for a new roommate. The new cat will receive love and excellent care.

Dates to Save: May 27 – Dining For Cats and Dogs – Lynn's Custom Meat and Catering 10:30 to 3 p.m.
July 2 – Boulder Lodge Cardboard Boat Races and barbeque for NHS – Noon
August 1 – NHS Tag Day – Volunteers needed