

Routsong Funeral Home, Inc.
Dayton, OH
Contact Name: Sherri L. Besselman

Pursuit of Excellence
I. Basic Requirements
E. Essay – Innovative Program

Routsong Pet Loss Services

For me personally, exploring the idea of creating a pet loss services program through our funeral home was a necessity and a labor of love. In 1999, I had to euthanize my beloved Fat Cat who had been in my care and part of my life for 12 years. In 2002, I had to make the same decision for my other cat, Lacey, her littermate and best friend. On both occasions, my vet asked me what I would like to do with their bodies. I stated that I wanted to have them cremated, so I could always take them with me no matter where I was living. That was not a problem; she would call the local pet cemetery since there was only one in the area. As it turned out, the local pet cemetery was not really “in our area”, which is what created the first problem in my mind. Because they were more than 20 miles away from Dayton, they made pick ups from the veterinary clinics about once a week, so on both occasions it took them 4 days before they even picked my cat up from my vet. This was totally unacceptable to me.

The second problem for me came about 10 days later – again, on both occasions, when I called the pet cemetery to see if the cremated remains were back at my vet’s office yet – they were not. I began envisioning to myself, if I owned a pet crematory/cemetery I would, whenever possible, pick up someone’s pet on the same day as the death and make sure that the cremated remains were returned to the owner as soon as possible. I would even go a step further and deliver, in person, that precious pet’s remains.

Fast forward to 2004...Thomas A. “TR” Routsong, owner of Routsong Funeral Home, asked me to head up a team that would create a pet loss program for the funeral home. After months of painstaking research, feasibility studies, phone calls, and visits to other funeral homes with similar programs this year we have rolled out Routsong Pet Loss Services. We serve the Dayton area along with surrounding communities. Because for so many people, their pets are a part of their family, we feel it is a natural extension of our services. Whenever possible we pick the pet up on the same day as the death and we also deliver, in person, the pet’s cremated remains back to the owner...just as I had envisioned. We also offer burial services and will care for any service for an assistance animal at no charge to the owner. We are very proud of our program. The staff has adjusted well to this new service and most importantly, the families and pets we have served have been treated with the utmost respect and compassion. Almost everyone has experienced the death of a beloved pet, so we know how we would want to be treated. It has been an honor to help create this program and I hope that other funeral homes will do the same.

Respectfully Submitted by
Anne Kuntz-Newman, CFSP, M.S. Counselor, LSW
Director of Aftercare Services / Funeral Director