

Louisiana to Mark Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina

National Katrina Animal Memorial to be unveiled at ceremony.

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Cats and dogs lost in Hurricane Katrina and the people who tried to rescue them will be honored with a memorial service in New Orleans.

Animal rescue volunteers who traveled to New Orleans in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina hit are being asked to return to the city, not for emergency purposes, but rather to pay tribute to the cats and dogs lost during the devastating floods and to the people who aided them.

A daylong memorial service Friday in New Orleans will feature the unveiling of a monument created to honor the companion animals that died during the disaster. The National Katrina Animal Memorial is the first to be dedicated to animal victims, said Jeff Dorson, executive director of the Humane Society of Louisiana, a shelter which was destroyed by Katrina and remains in exile in Mississippi.

"We are delighted that so many people, especially rescuers, are making the trip back," Dorson said Tuesday. "We want to reach out and thank those who saw the events on CNN and loaded up a van and drove here and jumped in the water. Those are the forgotten helpers and we want to recognize their worth and work."

The 180-pound statue, created by Baton Rouge artist Richard Chashoudian, will arrive from a foundry in Texas and will be on display in City Hall. It is a bronze, life-sized sculpture of a cat and a dog sitting on a plank.

The animals that people were mostly attached to were cats and dogs, Dorson said, and the organization hopes that they will represent all the animals and livestock lost. The memorial is sponsored by the Humane Society of Louisiana.