

Program Helps Pets of Hospice Patients

Banfield's 'Pet Peace of Mind' services include pet boarding and walking.

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A new program provides training and funding for hospices to start local programs that deliver volunteer pet-care services for patients. The Banfield Charitable Trust recently launched a program to help provide care for the pets of hospice patients nationwide.

"Pet Peace of Mind," which will be supported in part by donations in Banfield Pet Hospitals during the month of May, aims to allow hospice patients to complete their end-of-life journey without worrying about the current or future needs of their pets.

The program provides training and funding for hospices to start local programs that deliver volunteer pet-care services for patients who are unable to care for their pets while in hospice. Components include financial assistance with routine veterinary care, pet transportation to veterinary appointments, pet boarding and walking, access to pet food and necessary medicine and a new home for the pet once the patient has died.

"Pet Peace of Mind" was inspired by a program created by Delana Taylor McNac and the team at Hospice of Green Country in Tulsa, Okla.

"Many hospices want to start a pet-care program, but in most cases, the independent funding they secure goes toward filling gaps in their operating budgets," said Dianne McGill, executive director and chief executive officer of the Banfield Charitable Trust. "Hospices work hard to meet both the physical and emotional needs of their patients and we want to create a program that helps support the emotional side in a significant way. The human-pet bond is incredibly special. If we can help keep a patient and their pet together, we've accomplished what we set out to do."

More than 730 Banfield hospitals will be collecting funds through the "I Gave My Heart to Pets" campaign in May to support this program. A donation of \$3 earns a person's name on a self-sticking heart that will be posted throughout the hospital. A \$5 donation earns a sticky heart and a "Pet Peace of Mind" awareness ribbon.