

# Pet memorial provides comfort for owners

By Nancy Hopkins  
Stouffville This Month

When Nancy and Colin Graham's beloved Great Pyrenees dog Beau passed away in 1996, they realized how little support was available for people when their pets die.

"We knew there must be other pet owners who felt the same way," said Nancy. The couple spent two years researching what services were available in the area of pet loss and counselling and their findings led them to establish Thistledown Pet Memorial on a 50-acre property outside Uxbridge in 1998.

Veterinarians, like medical doctors, are responsible for the health and well-being of their clients, said Nancy, but not for funeral or counselling services. Losing a pet is a traumatic experience and she feels that pre-planning arrangements allow owners to make important decisions before the difficult final stage. After-care support services are also offered, and cremation urns can be placed in indoor or outdoor columbariums.

Visitors will find the main building and property



Nancy Graham, owner of Thistledown Pet Memorial, holds a stained glass urn, one of many available at the centre's location on Conc. 7 in Uxbridge. Thistledown provides personalized services to people coping with the loss of a beloved pet and offers indoor and outdoor resting places for the urns.

in keeping with Thistledown's vision of providing an environment of dignity and respect for animals and their families. The facility carries a wide selection of urns, granite headstones, keepsake boxes and memorial candles, as well as books which help people through the grieving process.

Upon learning their dog had terminal cancer, a distressed Stouffville family contacted Thistledown. Under Nancy's direction they made pre-planning decisions that included a veterinarian who performed euthanasia at their home with Nancy there for support. She spent time with the family, talking and burning a memorial candle, before taking the animal away, returning two days later with the ashes. The urn was placed in a columbarium at Thistledown where a spot is being held for another family pet.

Nancy found the different beliefs and requests from clients of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds "an ongoing fascinating experience". The Asian community holds its pets in high regard, she said, and many have

memorialized them in Thistledown's indoor columbariums, visiting often, burning incense and bringing food with them. Many families have spaces reserved for remaining family pets.

Graham encourages people to bring their pets to enjoy the property and its marked walking trails, deer meadow and tree

grove before making their way inside to learn about the company's services. Located at 4766 Concession 7 north of Durham St., Thistledown is open to visitors from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

For more information call (905) 852-5648 or visit [www.thistledown.com](http://www.thistledown.com).



Parties are fun for all ages, as residents of Buckingham Manor demonstrated at their Spooky Halloween Bash at the Main St. retirement home. Here Sharron Brazier (blue hat) helps Ruth Law (wheelchair), jailbird Alan Last and Hetti Bradburn enjoy the fun, which included a costume parade, games and delicious baked goods. Sponsors included McDonald's, Tim Hortons and Unionville Presbyterian Church.

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Congratulations to the new Mayor and Council. My sincere thanks to the many people who supported me in my recent Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayoralty campaign. I look forward to following the affairs of the town over the next three years.

*Steve Pliakes*