



Pet owners look over some of the new bricks that were dedicated in the Carla E. Fisher Memorial Garden. | JON LANGHAM-FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA

Humane society dedicates garden walk

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A blessing of pets at the Hinsdale Humane Society Sunday was as much about people treasuring the animals they brought to the event, as it was remembering pets and relatives who had passed away.

Pets "are beloved family members," the Rev. Susan Gerow of Grace Lutheran Church in La Grange told about 50 people gathered outside the humane society.

Blessing the animals is "a way to give thanks for the love between people and their pets. I believe God creates that love between us," Gerow said.

"I know all of you are here because you have experienced that great love and

compassion. You are here because you love a pet, or have loved a pet," she said.

Gerow knew many came because they "are missing (their) four-legged friends and some two-legged people, too."

On the west side of its building at 22 N. Elm St., the humane society created the Carla E. Fisher Memorial Garden, with flowers, a patio with engraved memorial bricks and a bench for quiet reflection. On Sunday, 51 new personalized bricks in honor or memory of both pets and people were dedicated.

Robert Martinek of Western Springs had bought a paver and had it inscribed: "In loving memory of my parents and our beloved pets."

His parents, both deceased, were pet owners all

their lives, Martinek said at the ceremony.

"I got one of the best pets of my life, a yellow lab named Annie, from the Hinsdale Humane Society," Martinek said.

He knows the benefits a pet can bring. His father, Otto Martinek, was in ManorCare in Hinsdale for seven years before he died in March. Therapy dogs visited the nursing home patients, including his father, whose vision was failing.

"It was so helpful to my dad," Martinek said. "You don't need to have sight to enjoy an animal."

Alan Kitzer's mother, sister and niece, their grief still visible on their faces, attended the dedication ceremony in his honor.

Kitzer died of leukemia in March.

"He was only 54," said his mother, Helen Racan of Brookfield. "I still can't believe it."

Kitzer's dog, a border collie mix named Molly, whom he had gotten from the humane society, had died just months earlier, about the time when Kitzer was diagnosed with leukemia. The family had the dog's ashes buried with Kitzer, Racan said.

The ceremony Sunday included flutes, a poem, the reading of a prayer from St. Francis of Assisi and Gerow's individual blessing of each pet there.

Gerow's closing prayer asked God to "grant the animals health and peace. Strengthen us to love and care for them as we strive to live compassionately."