

## Celebration of Life for your Pet

Coleen Ellis, Founder, Pet Angel Memorial Center

While our society may still have mixed feelings about funerals for pets, some people feel the need to have a gathering in honor of their beloved friend. And, since the adage is very true that “funerals are for the living” then I think that it’s more than appropriate to bring together those friends and family members that played a part in your pet’s life. This is a great time for a surviving pet parent or entire family to want to have their support system around themselves and to publicly pay tribute to this pet that was so big in many lives.

Possibly, instead of a “funeral,” many families and pet parents are instead turning to the beautiful way of honoring their loved one with having a “Celebration of Life” gathering. And, what could be more appropriate to honor and pay homage to the unconditional love that you received from your little furry friend.

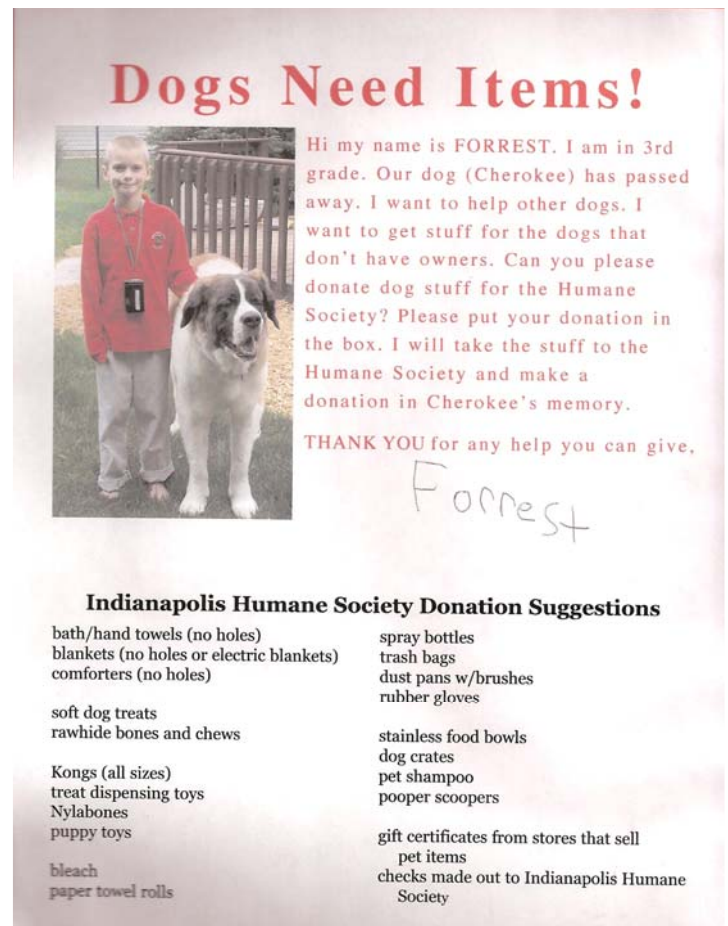
## The Creation of a Celebration of Life Gathering

Cherokee was a very loved St. Bernard. She had a human mommy & daddy and a brother, Forrest. When she died, the family was devastated. This was their little girl. This was Forrest’s big sister. She was truly a loved member of the family.

Reeling in their grief, the family began to search out the things that they could do to positively channel their grief. Furthermore, they also wanted to allow their extended family and neighbors to be able to come together and pay tribute to this four-legged friend who had touched so many people.

## Step One – Creating the Event

The family wanted to give back to the animal world in memory of Cherokee. Therefore, it was decided that a drive would be done for the local Humane Society to collect items for the homeless animals. A poster was made for Forrest to take to school to begin the collection.



**Dogs Need Items!**

Hi my name is FORREST. I am in 3rd grade. Our dog (Cherokee) has passed away. I want to help other dogs. I want to get stuff for the dogs that don't have owners. Can you please donate dog stuff for the Humane Society? Please put your donation in the box. I will take the stuff to the Humane Society and make a donation in Cherokee's memory.

THANK YOU for any help you can give.

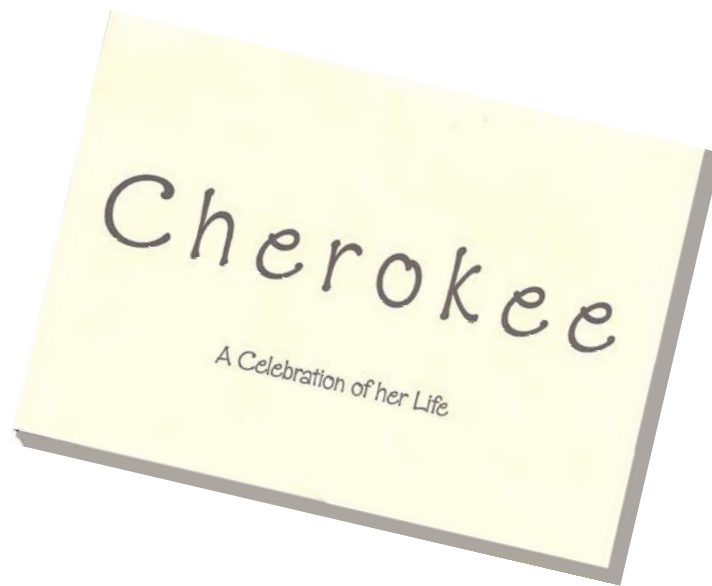
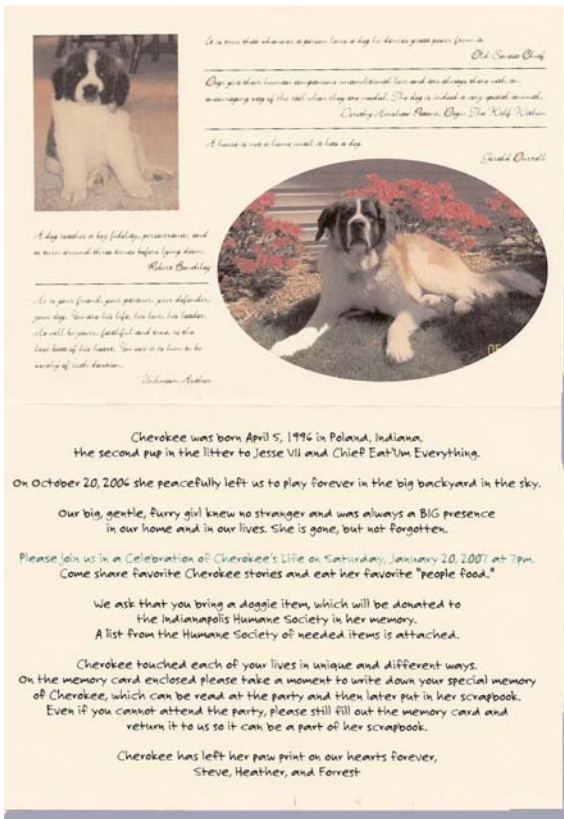
Forrest

**Indianapolis Humane Society Donation Suggestions**

bath/hand towels (no holes)	spray bottles
blankets (no holes or electric blankets)	trash bags
comforters (no holes)	dust pans w/brushes
	rubber gloves
soft dog treats	stainless food bowls
rawhide bones and chews	dog crates
Kongs (all sizes)	pet shampoo
treat dispensing toys	pooper scoopers
Nylabones	
puppy toys	gift certificates from stores that sell pet items
bleach	checks made out to Indianapolis Humane Society
paper towel rolls	

## Step Two – The Invitation

The invitations were designed to invite people to the Celebration of Life gathering.



## Step Three – The Celebration Begins!

"At the party we served people food that we let Cherokee eat. Things like cheese and crackers, popcorn, pretzels, and her favorite—deviled eggs. Her scrapbook was out for people to look through. In the invitation I had put a memory card and asked everyone to fill it out with their favorite Cherokee memory. I read those at the party and later added them to her scrapbook....Following Forrest's request, in the invitation I had also asked people to bring a donation to the Humane Society. I included a suggestion list from the Indianapolis Humane Society's website. I was overwhelmed by everyone's generosity. We had a great collection of things and money to make a donation to the Humane Society in memory of Cherokee."

**Cherokee's Mommy - Heather**

The Celebration was truly all about Cherokee! I showed up at the party, with my memory slip completed and my donation to the Humane Society in hand. When I entered the house, I could smell the devilled

eggs and the special cookies that had been baked that day for her. The computer screen was loaded with a screen saver that was full of photos of Cherokee's life. The memory table was set up with photos, toys, her scrapbook, and her urn. It was a gathering that she would've loved!

## Step Four – Giving Back to the Animal World

The trip to the Humane Society made my heart feel full and warm. I couldn't wait to meet the family at the shelter and to be a part of the giving to the homeless animals, all in the name of Cherokee. And, a giving it was! Money, food, treats, toys, blankets, and anything else that appeared on the "Wish List" was in the truckload to be handed over.

