

Support through grief's journey

By Debbie Frenette

Bijou filled our lives with pure joy, fun and unconditional love every single day. Our family is eternally grateful for having him in our lives for nine years and I am blessed to have had the honour of being his mom. Bijou's beauty, gentle nature and friendly personality endeared him not only to his family but also to all of the people and other animals that he encountered.

How brave and strong our little jewel was to carry on with energy and spunk while having a type of cancer that is so rare in smaller dogs and was undetectable until the day that he died. The cancer had spread so much at that point that there was nothing that the veterinary specialists could do to save him. The only consolation at that point was that we got to take Bijou home and hold him in our arms and love and comfort him at the end of his precious life.

Bijou's death came so suddenly and unexpectedly that my family and I were completely shocked and truly devastated. We thought that we would have many more wonderful years together with Bijou. The grief that I experienced after Bijou's passing was extremely intense as he was such a vital and integral part of my everyday life. I did not know how to deal with his sudden loss or know how to go on living without him. I knew that I needed support beyond my veterinarian's caring words and the love of my family.

Eleven years ago, after our wonderful dog Snowy passed away, I had found support at

the Pet Loss Support Group at the Animal Services Centre. However, when I attempted to turn there for help this time, I found that the group was no longer in existence. My daughter helped me search for other sources of pet loss support and thankfully we found it with Straja Linder King, who had previously been the director of group support at the Animal Services Centre.



Bijou – Our Little Jewel, May 9, 2005 – December 10, 2014

When I first came to Straja, my grief was so strong that I could not find the words to express my feelings. Through art therapy, memorial tributes, journaling and counselling, Straja is helping me to work through my intense grief while honouring the won-

derful memories of Bijou. I am so grateful for her genuine understanding and continual support.

When a human loved one dies, society helps by providing support with empathy and rituals for closure. When the departed loved one is a pet, it is much harder to find the support that is so desperately needed. It is vital to be among people who truly understand the magnitude and intensity of losing a beloved pet. There is a comfort that comes with sharing the feelings of loss that is truly healing.

I am glad to know that Straja is forming a new pet loss support group this fall. I am looking forward to having the opportunity to assist with the Pet Loss Partners Workshop, which will be held monthly at Straja's community studio in St. Stephen's church. Here, a sharing circle will enable people to share their stories in a safe, quiet and warm atmosphere. Together we will companion with each other in the company of renowned therapy dogs Twillow Rose and Tala Rain as we navigate through the losses of our cherished pets. In the meantime, I will continue on my own journey of grief with Straja's support, always honouring the memory of our beloved little jewel, Bijou.

Bijou, you live forever in our hearts. Thank you for all of the love and joy that you brought to every day of our lives. May you feel our love as we feel yours, always and forever.

For more information on the monthly Pet Loss Partners Workshop, please contact Straja Linder King at (403) 630-1020. 🐾



403-630-1020 www.strawberrymooncounselling.com

Pet Loss Counselling
Connect. Release. Heal.



Losing a pet hurts. Strawberry Moon Counselling's Pet Loss Partners Workshop can help.

Every first Monday, 7 pm - 9 pm
At Strawberry Moon's community studio
(Inside St. Stephen's Anglican Church)
1121 - 14 Ave. SW, Calgary, AB
\$55 per class. Call to register.