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WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2009

TIMES PRESS

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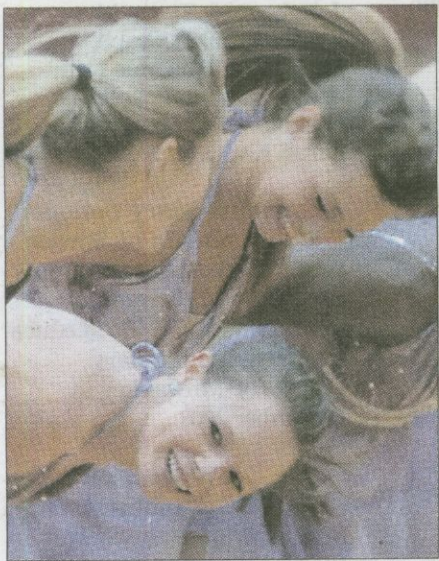
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Last rites, a pet's right?

Shimon family says four-legged funerals are an emerging trend for pet owners

By **KYLE ZWIEG**
Times Press Editor

RICHFIELD – A new business opened Saturday, under the auspices that four-legged companions deserve last rites similar to their human brethren.

The owners of Peaceful Pets Pet Funeral Services, an offshoot of Shimon Funeral Home in Hartford, say it is the first pet funeral service of any kind to open in southeastern Wisconsin.

To that end, the company is marketing itself as a full-service funeral home, but for pets. Its inventive interior storefront is modeled to look like an all-American home front, complete with maroon siding, windows, and green faux-grass carpeting similar in look to an old "Brady Bunch" episode.

Prior to its services, Peaceful Pets will visit a veterinarian's office or home to pick up the deceased pet. The company will even pick up an ailing pet whose family can't bear to take it to a vet to be put to sleep, co-owner Mike Shimon said.

"It's hard for people to take their pets to the vet to get euthanized, so we offer a service that will actually go to their house and pick them up for that," said Shimon, who runs the business with his brother, Matt. "Then they don't have to go to the vet at all."

The store's interior includes a chapel, office area and refreshment nook, retail space and a separate crematory. It is the second retailer to open in a new strip mall development located near



Kris Fassa/Times Press Staff

Peaceful Pets Pet Funeral Services co-owner Mike Shimon chats with Diane and Randy Meyer of Hartford during an open house Saturday afternoon in Richfield. The business is an offshoot of Shimon Funeral Home of Hartford, and its owners say it is the first of its type in the region.

Richfield's Cabela's store.

The business also sells a variety of caskets, urns both simple and lavish, and other products available for families grieving the loss of a pet. It is located at the 3010 Retail Center, a former industrial building at the Helsan Business Park renovated into a shopping center by Germantown's Helsan Development Co.

Mike and Matt Shimon also serve as funeral directors at Shimon Funeral Home, located on Hartford's Union Street. The family business is also operated by their father Steve, mother Linda, and brother Zak.

Mike Shimon said the funeral home, which opened about 12 years ago, has

received numerous calls over the years requesting services for animals. No one else around here does it, he said, but successful services are run in the Appleton and Green Bay areas.

The brothers have been working on the business since January, though they began brainstorming ideas about two years ago.

"We've heard about it in other states and, for pets, there's not a lot available," Shimon said. "We just wanted to have another option for pet owners."

Families holding a service have the option of watching their departed friend gently placed into the cremator

Please see **PEACEFUL PETS/A8**

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Peaceful Pets: Grand opening

through a window in the chapel area, or they can choose not to.

The cremations are part of packages that can include a service, urns and, in some cases, burials. Some families opt for a quiet cremation, though others will gather for a final farewell service.

"We don't expect there to be huge crowds, like a traditional funeral, but if people think that there will be more people we will have chairs set up in here also," Shimon said.

Helsan Development Vice President Jennifer Miller said she was taken aback when the Shimon family first reached out to her company.

"When we first got the phone call, we were definitely caught off guard," Miller said. "But once we did our research and went and checked out the one in Appleton. That one was very professional and didn't have any ill effects.

"We looked at who was around it and what was in the building next to it," she said. "There was a Starbucks next door, so we felt very good about it."

One concern was whether the cremation facilities would emit ashes or other chemicals into the air, or be a noisy distraction to nearby businesses. The only other business currently in the 3010 Center is a Hallman Lindsay paint store.

Miller said the Appleton business had assisted in more than 350 pet funerals during a 9-month period. A test run of Peaceful Pets' cremation facilities showed it to be quiet, and free of pollution and negative emissions, Shimon said.

"I think because they've done it so professionally, it will be a good draw for the area. People will come from a ways to do it," Miller said.

Besides the cremation services and

"Pets really become a member of the family."

– **Mike Shimon**

Peaceful Pets Pet Funeral Services

chapel, Peaceful Pets also sells urns and jewelry to decorate them. Some are simple wooden boxes, while others can be life-size models of pets, ceramic figurines or decorative stones for flower beds.

One tiny urn, designed for the ashen remains of a hunting dog, can be placed inside the recoil spring in the butt of a hunting rifle. The gun remains fully operational.

Another urn is a ceramic doghouse and can be paired with one of dozens of ceramic dog figurines available. Yet another is a stepping stone that can be engraved – or left blank – and placed in a flower bed or along a stone walkway.

Customers can also send in photos

and have a tote bag, afghan blanket or decorative pillow made in the image of their pet. Each of Peaceful Pets' funeral service packages include a keepsake fur clipping and ceramic paw print.

"Pets really become a member of the family," Shimon said.

Shimon said his family chose Richfield because it was more centralized in the county and has easy access to the metropolitan area.

The business can serve owners of any type of pet – including birds, lizards, rodents and beyond.

Peaceful Pets also plans to hold training sessions for living pets and owners on nutrition and other topics, Shimon said.