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Rain doesn't deter folks from attending a blessing of the pets ceremony

by Marisa Gwidt | For The Saginaw News

Monday September 15, 2008, 7:26 AM



Michael Hollenbeck | The Saginaw News

Rev. Frank Voris of St. Anthony's of Padua officiates during the blessing of the pets Sunday at the Memorial Pet Cemetery, 3764 Hackett.

Driving rain and flood warnings did not stop animal lovers from paying their respects to their pets Sunday.

A crowd of about 50 people and 15 leashed pups gathered at the Memorial Pet Cemetery, 3764 Hackett in Saginaw Township, in honor of National Pet Memorial Day. A Capuchin priest, the Rev. Frank Voris of St. Anthony's of Padua, blessed the pets under a striped tent.

"He blessed the animals so that they have a good life here and later in

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heaven," said Helen Vacik, 11, who lives across the street from the cemetery and owns a 10-month-old Black Lab-Golden Retriever mix. "I would have brought my dog, but she's too wild and would jump all over people."

Sue Kisser, 56, of Saginaw Township brought her 8-year-old dog, Morgan, to the pet blessing. Her previous dog is buried in the cemetery.

"We have 5 acres of land, but I couldn't bring myself to bury our dog when it happened," she said. "This cemetery is a nice place because it's permanent and if you move, you can still pay respects to your pet just like any other member of the family."

Saginaw Township's Howard Crevia, 84, and Mary Ruth Crevia, 81, established the cemetery in 1975. The site now holds 5,000 graves, which span 2 of its 10 acres and it holds any type of pet from a cat or dog to a fawn.

State Sen. Roger N. Kahn, a Saginaw Township Republican, gave the Crevias a Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm-autographed plaque to honor their 33 years of dedicated pet burial service Sunday.

Soon-to-be Saginaw resident Julie Curran, 46, took over the property in November.

"I've always had an interest in pets and cemeteries," Curran said. "But I never dreamt I'd own a pet cemetery, and it's been one of the best decisions of my life."

Next year, Curran will add a crematorium and "Garden of Heroes" for service animals and K-9 police dogs. As a certified pet loss and bereavement counselor with a degree in social work, she also plans to add some pet bereavement sessions.

Retirees Jim Monahan and Joan Monahan kept their two shelties in the car and out of the rain Sunday while they browsed headstones on sale at the cemetery starting at \$150. They buried their previous dogs in their backyard and were hoping to purchase some grave markers.

"We used to plant trees to mark the gravesites," Joan Monahan said. "We're running out of room, though, so a headstone might be nice."



Michael Hollenbeck | The Saginaw News

Tina and Frank Gulczinski, each 63, of Thomas Township keep Zak, 15, warm as they keep a towel wrapped around him during the blessing of the pets at the Memorial Pet Cemetery.

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