

When you lose a beloved pet, any keepsake or link to them becomes all the more important. There are lots of ways to mark the memory of your pet - from garden monuments to tribute websites - but here are a few of the

Memories are made

A lasting impression

LIKE A HUMAN fingerprint, a dog's nose print is made up of a unique set of patterns. No two are the same and in the USA nose prints are even being used as a form of identification in place of microchips.

Jeweller Robin Durnbaugh from Fort Wayne, Indiana, has always been interested in designing and creating unusual pieces, so dog nose prints made a perfect subject for her pendants.

"By the time I started to design nose print pendants, I had already been creating fingerprint pendants for people," said Robin. "I always had people asking me if I would do their dog's paw print for them. I had tried this several times, but I was never happy with the results. When taking a paw print impression you need to deal with the fur for one thing, and also the fact that a dog's paw is usually not very attractive. The paw spends much time outdoors and is usually very rough."

In 1998, Robin got a call from a friend who had to have her dog put to sleep. "She was crying and asked me to come right over and take her dog's paw print regardless of what it would look like," remembers Robin. "When I was sitting on the floor at the veterinary office, taking her dog's paw print, the idea hit me. I immediately took an impression of her dog's nose. I couldn't get home quick enough to design this pendant for my dear friend. It turned out beautifully. On the back, I engraved her dog's name. To this day my friend still enjoys wearing her pendant, which I made out of solid 14kt gold. I also made a chrome version for her husband. He is not much of a jewellery wearer, so he put his on a keychain."

It was while at the vet's that day that Robin was told about nose prints being unique, so she decided to start offering pet nose prints alongside her fingerprint pendants, and they soon became very popular.

Robin and her husband both work in metals and own their own dental lab, making crowns and bridges for dentists.



Robin's pendants are not just worn by people - her dogs wear their own nose prints with pride

Robin became a self-taught artist when her two daughters went to high school, and she used techniques from her dental work to experiment with her pendants until she perfected them.

Robin's pendants are not just worn by people - her dogs wear their own nose prints with pride. She said, "We have two dogs. Mr Higgins is a handsome Weimaraner, and Haddley is a beautiful West Highland White Terrier. I have designed both their nose print pendants, which they wear proudly as their dog tags. On the back of their pendants I have their

name and also our phone number."

Robin's beautiful pendants are available to people all over the world, as you can do the initial impression yourself in the comfort of your own pet's basket. When Robin receives an order she sends out a material kit. The kit has easy-to-follow instructions as well as a sample impression so you can see what the finished one should look like. Robin likes at least three impressions to work from, but they only take a few minutes to do.

"The material only stays on the dog's nose for a second or so," said



To find out more about Robin's nose print pendants, visit www.robinsrazzmatazz.com or email robinsrazzmatazz@msn.com

more unusual ways to capture your pet, or his ashes, to treasure forever

of these

Robin. "You mix the material, and, in one movement, roll it on the dog's nose and back off. It can be done before the dog even knows that you did anything. The material I use is non-toxic and also non-staining."

Once Robin receives the impressions she is able to design as many pendants as required, out of solid 14 carat yellow or white gold, sterling silver or chrome. She keeps all

the original impressions and is able to create more at any time. Each pendant is designed individually, so no two are the same, even though the impressions are.

Robin's nose print pendants have proved to be a big hit with most of her work coming via word of mouth. "When I make one for someone and their friends see it, they then want one and it keeps going," said Robin. "I am often



called to vets to take impressions of pets that have died by people who have heard of my pendants. They are such a beautiful way to keep your loved one close when they are gone. I like to think of a dog's nose as a window to its heart. I love the old saying 'cold nose, warm heart', as it's so true!" ::

Precious memories

LUCKY, AN Old English Sheepdog, and Sam, a Golden Retriever cross, died 12 and 15 years ago and until last year their ashes sat on the mantelpiece in Sue Rogers' home. Now they sparkle on Sue's finger as a LifeGem diamond.

Sue from Bideford, Devon, first heard about LifeGem in a magazine article about a woman who had her husband's ashes made into a diamond. Having lost her two dogs some years ago and then more recently her cat, Patch, Sue was looking for an interesting memorial idea for her pets.

Sue enquired about LifeGem at her local jewellers and, although they had not heard of them, they were very interested in finding out more. They

contacted the company on Sue's behalf and arranged for some ashes from each of her three pets to be sent.

Lucky, Sam and Patch were transformed for £2,600 into a blue diamond, which Sue then had set in a ring.

"I'm absolutely delighted with the finished diamond," said Sue. "I've always liked jewellery anyway and now I feel my pets are with me all the time. I never take the ring off. It means everything to me that I am able to remember them in this way."

LifeGem diamonds are created by placing carbon from ashes in conditions that recreate the forces of nature. A diamond that takes millions of years to be created naturally can



now be created using carbon from your beloved pets' ashes in about 24 weeks. It is then certified in the same way as a natural diamond.

Prices start from £2,100 and the diamonds are available in white, red, green, blue or yellow. They can also be created in whatever size or cut a customer requests. Completely confident of the quality of their diamonds, LifeGem offers an exclusive lifetime guarantee against any defects.

Leading pet crematorium CPC has entered into a partnership with LifeGem to offer bereaved clients the opportunity to capture the essence of their beloved pets in this unique way.

Duncan Francis from CPC said, "Having a stunning diamond created from a pet's ashes and set into jewellery provides an everlasting link, which some people find very comforting. This is certainly one of the most special ways to commemorate a pet's life that we have come across and we wanted to inform our customers of this option as part of our fully comprehensive service." ::

If you are interested in finding out more about CPC and LifeGem memorial diamonds, telephone 01763 207700 or visit www.cpccares.com or www.life-gem-uk.com, telephone 0845 230 4962

There are more ways to mark your pet's memory overleaf >





Celebration in clay
 Four years ago Neil Richardson discovered a way of including a small amount of human ashes into his pottery to create special commemorative pots. Through his company Here In Spirit, he has produced unique pieces for people using the ashes of their loved ones and is now offering a pet service, too.
 Neil made his first personalised urn in 2003, using some of his father's ashes, and it was so effective that he was soon taking commissions from people who wanted the same thing.
 Neil has a cat and dog himself and soon realised that there were pet



owners who would like personalised urns. He created a pot for his sister, using the ashes of her cat, and plans to create pots from his own pets when they pass away.
 Neil uses a process called copper fuming to achieve the unusual finish to his pots and they are fired using the Japanese raku method, which involves rapid temperature change.
 "The spiritual effect that the process achieves captures some of the essence of the life that has gone," explained Neil.
 "They are a celebration of life lived in joyous Technicolor unlike traditional urns. The first one I made was a celebration of my dad and every day I look at it and smile."
 Neil has already had commissions

for half a dozen pets so is going to start a separate business just focussing on animals. As an animal lover himself, Neil sees the need for his service and says that he treats the animal commissions in exactly the same way, with love and great care.
 "A small amount of the ashes are mixed with a base glaze and applied to the pot," explained Neil. "It is then individually fired to 1,000 degrees C before it is removed and placed on to a nest of fine sawdust. It ignites and it's then that the elements are reanimated and the ashes cause the unique colours and patterns to be produced."
 Neil believes that we shouldn't look at death as such a sad and morbid occasion but follow other cultures and instead celebrate the life lived. Neil said, "They are beautiful pieces that you can display and no one will know what they are unless you tell them. It's much nicer than a Victorian-looking urn, which everyone will recognise on your mantelpiece." ::

Prices for Neil Richardson's personalised urns start from £75. When ordering, he will send you a jiffy bag in which to send about a tablespoon of ashes. For more information and to see examples of his work, visit www.hereinspirit.com or call 01834 842048.



Cast in time
 Life-casting company Cast In Time has just launched its new Precious Paws range of imprint and casting kits for pet owners. The kits have been developed as a result of the success of the company's baby kits.
 At just £15 for the standard imprint kit, it is an affordable way to create a very personal keepsake of your pet. This kit enables you to produce

one imprint of a paw and mount it in a supplied frame alongside a photograph. The premium imprint kit at £25 has enough imprint dough for a double paw print and this also comes with a frame and room for a photograph.
 Cast In Time also sells a casting kit for £45, which allows you to produce up to four paw sculptures that can be finished off in bronze paint.
 If you have more money to spend



on a casting and would rather not do it yourself - although the kits are very easy to use - you can arrange for a casting session.
 Melinda and Ruth Michelson-Carr opted for a home visit when they chose to have their two Yorkshire Terriers, Clara and Remington, cast.
 Melinda had been looking for ways to remember her dogs and when the news came that Clara may not be with them for much longer, this quest became a priority. "Clara has been with us for almost 11 years," said Melinda. "When we were told by the vet that Clara is dying it became very important to celebrate and commemorate her life."

Melinda and Ruth Michelson-Carr opted for a home visit when they chose to have their two Yorkshire Terriers, Clara and Remington, cast

Both Clara and Remington were cast by Rita from Cast In Time during a home visit and Clara found the experience very therapeutic.
 "The casting was much easier than I expected," said Melinda. "Rita was really sensitive and very gentle with Clara. Clara seemed to absolutely love it and especially enjoyed having her paws massaged beforehand. Rita took her cues from us acknowledging that we knew her best."
 When Melinda receives the finished pieces they are going to be displayed on a mantelpiece in a room that is often used, so the paws can be looked at and picked up easily.
 Melinda said, "When we look at her bronzed paw prints, part of her will still be very much in our midst. They are a visual and tangible reminder of Clara's presence and all the love she has brought into our lives. A memorial to Clara is a keepsake for us." ::



We have a casting kit, a premium imprint kit and a standard imprint kit to give away to three lucky readers. Send your name and address on a postcard to: Casting competition, *Dogs Today*, Town Mill, Bagshot Rd, Chobham, Surrey, GU24 8BZ. Closing date for entries is 3 May 2007.

For more information about casting and to buy casting or imprint kits, visit www.castintime.co.uk or telephone 01733 367387.



EXTREME CROSS BREEDING!

Crossbreeding eh? What fun! Take a little bit of this dog and a little bit of that dog and, Bob's your uncle, a brand new dog! Just like making a cake but without the currants. But why just stick with the one species? Mother Nature? Pah! Show her how to mix things up a bit!...

TORTOISE + DOG =
 WELL I'M BEAT! TIME FOR HOME METHINKS.

FISH + DOG =
 FETCH!
 I'M A LITTLE RESTRICTED HERE, WOMAN!

ELEPHANT + DOG =
 OH DEAR, I DON'T THINK I THOUGHT THIS LITTLE ELEPHANT-DOG THING THROUGH ENOUGH...

ANT + DOG =
 HAVE YOU SEEN LITTLE FIDO?
 NO, BUT I THINK I JUST SAT ON A CRISP
 CRUNCH

CAT + DOG =
 GRAB!
 SCREECH!