

Woman begins program to care for patients' pets

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When Naperville resident Ann Marie Glaviano was too ill from lupus to care for the pets she loved, she found comfort in knowing they were in good hands.

Her two dwarf bunnies, three guinea pigs and four cockatiels were taken in by foster families.

Community residents fed her three cats and walked her dog when her immune system was too weakened by chemotherapy to be around them.

“When I was in chemotherapy, I couldn’t be exposed to all the bacteria,” she said. “Even the plants had to go.”

Glaviano managed to keep her dog and cats and credits them with being a supportive presence in her recovery.

Often, her cat, Nana, was her only confidante, she said. Her dog, Medici, a papillon, would pull off her socks before she went to bed and sometimes would pull a cordless phone to her.

Nana died of cancer in Glaviano’s arms three years ago. Medici, like his owner, was diagnosed with lupus and underwent chemotherapy.

Medici’s death in March is what drove Glaviano’s decision to start PetsNPatients. The purpose is find foster homes for pets whose owners are unable to care for them for medical reasons.

“Pets are part of your family,” said Glaviano, who now lives with three cats and the cockatiels that have returned home.

A volunteer with Animal Heartline Humane Association, Glaviano said she will work with that organization to find foster homes. Even pets that end up needing permanent homes will have a better chance of finding suitable ones if they first are taken into foster care, said Christina Farkas, president of the Naperville-based organization.

PetsNPatients also plans to partner with Saret Charitable Fund to provide the owners with the resources they might need in emergencies, Glaviano said.

Currently working on obtaining non-profit status for PetsNPatients, Glaviano already is collecting stories from other lupus patients on how their pets helped them in their recovery.

Her aim is to put together an 18-month calendar that would feature some of those stories. Part of the proceeds of the calendar sales would go to the Lupus Foundation of America-Illinois Chapter.

For details on PetsNPatients, visit www.petsnpatients.com.

For information on Animal Heartline Humane Association, visit www.animalheartline.org.