

Hi All,

Just wanted to let you know that today Friends of Nikki celebrated its 13th year. My Shih Tzu, Nikki (aka Nicole), died on May 30, 2000. Soon after she had been diagnosed with lymphoma, I had imagined the concept of a peer-based support group to help other pet parents with their feelings about ill and aging pets. By the end of 2000 I had begun the process of creating Friends of Nikki, in memory of my little girl. She inspired me in ways I can never explain. By March of 2001, Nikki and I were ready to begin the journey which has changed my life around. Nikki left behind two brothers, Danni, another Shih Tzu, and Doogie, a Pekingese. They continued to support and teach their Mommy how to help others through grief. What started out as a support group for parents of ill and aging pets grew into including actual pet loss support. Through many years now of studying the grief process, and obtaining certification through the Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement, I have grown to meet Nikki's high standards of service to others. I thank those, in addition to my canine family, who inspired me to keep going, and even start teaching others, when I wasn't all that sure of myself. They include my dear friend, Debbi Antinori, Professional Counselor specializing in grief and pet loss, Dr Wallace Sife, Psychologist and founder of The Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement, and another good friend, Teresa Wagner, Professional Counselor and Animal Communicator - founder of Animals in Our Hearts. They provided the support and education I needed to move from nursing to pet loss counseling, as well as ongoing support and supervision. Despite all my attempts to succeed, Friends of Nikki would be nothing without each of you. I have learned through you, and your dearly loved "babies", more than any book, class or expert could teach me. Therefore, on the eve of Friends of Nikki's 13th year, I want to thank each of you from the bottom of my heart. You helped to make Nikki and my dream come true. With my two current "kids", Lilly and Tommy, both Japanese Chin, and the many feral cats who have touched my life over the past 2 years, especially Nikki (II), Sam, Sarah, Steven and Cindy, I look forward to the next thirteen years of ongoing support to anyone who has loved and lost a precious animal. I pray I can continue to ease even just a little of the pain you experience upon saying goodbye to one so special. May each of you, and all the animals that come into my life, continue to teach me what I need to know in order to do this work. Last, but not least, thank you Nicole Kimberly Kahora for touching my soul in a way that no one else could. Mommy will always love and admire the 12 1/2 pounds of joy you were, and continue to be, in my life. May our work, as my love for you, continue forever and a day.

Thank you each of you for listening.

Love and Blessings,
Donna