

Elysian Crossing offers a personal touch to pet cremation services

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A local Amaranth couple are on a mission to make end-of-life services for pets local, affordable and empathetic.

Elysian Crossing, a small pet cremation business operating on a rural property in Amaranth, was born from personal loss and a desire to offer grieving pet owners a more compassionate, affordable option close to home.

Kevin and Ruth Solski, who started the business, are lifelong pet owners and have experienced the pain of saying goodbye. Those experiences made them acutely aware of how costly end-of-life services for animals have become, and how overwhelming it can be for families dealing with grief.

"We've been pet owners for such a long time, we've gone through those losses," Solski said. "We saw the need for there to be a more affordable option that has compassion and works with owners."

Solski said that they saw a gap between what corporate providers were offering and what local residents actually needed: a service grounded in dignity, personal care, and affordability.

"We want to be very cognizant, very aware that our clients need to be treated with dignity and compassion, and that their pets, as an extension of that, will be treated with the same compassionate afterlife care," she said.

"We work one on one with all of our clients, we personally handle every pet from the time we pick them up to the time we drop them off. You know exactly who has your pet from when you drop them off to when you pick them up, every step of the way."

Elysian Crossing's operations are entirely based on the owners' 6.5-acre countryside property, which they describe as peaceful and familiar to many in the area.

Setting it up was a multi-year process.

Before they could accept a single client, they had to secure land-use permits from the Township of Amaranth and Dufferin County, followed by provincial environmental approvals.

Local officials were notably supportive. From the initial idea to opening their doors, the process took about three years.

"The township and the county were actually really, really good to work with," Solski said. "They wanted to see small businesses in the area, and they were exceptional in helping us get up and running. The mayor of Amaranth even wrote a letter to Sylvia Jones to try and expedite the process for us on the provincial side."

Elysian Crossing has now been operating for roughly a year. Business has grown slowly and organically, primarily through word of mouth and online reviews.

The Solskis do not have formal partnerships with veterinary clinics, which often have established corporate providers, but they do see some informal referrals and repeat clients who return when another pet passes away.

A key distinction of their service is that they only provide individual cremations. Every family receives their pet's ashes back, typically in a simple tin, with the option to purchase a range of urns through their website.

“Other companies offer communal and joint cremations as well, at a lower price point,” Solski said. “We made the decision that we were going to try to offer only individual cremations, but trying to kind of get it down to that price point that you would see for communal cremations.”

While many of the standard urns are sourced from outside the region, the couple is actively working to bring more local craftsmanship into their offerings. They offer custom urns from an Owen Sound artisan and memorial jewelry incorporating ashes from a maker in Orangeville.

Elysian Crossing is also exploring partnerships with local artists for pet portraits.

Guided by their faith and a belief in caring for all of creation, the Solskis frame Elysian Crossing as both a business and a calling: a way to walk alongside residents during one of the most difficult moments of pet ownership, and to ensure those animals are treated with dignity from beginning to end.

“We really sincerely do care,” Solski said. “We’ve been there, and nothing eases the pain of the loss of a pet, but if we could make that journey a little bit easier, alleviate some of that strain, that’s what we’re here for.”

For more information, go to: elysiancrossing.ca