

A Memorial To Peter Gurney And To Guinea Pigs

People across the world are invited to be part of a candle-lighting ceremony on March 9 to honor Peter Gurney and to remember all departed guinea pigs.

By Marylou Zarbock

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Courtesy of Audrey Binder

Audrey Binder and Gordon, her pet guinea pig, have lit a candle in honor of Peter Gurney during past memorials.

Peter Gurney. His name is almost legendary in the guinea pig community. Although Peter Gurney passed away in 2006, his legacy to pet guinea pigs and their owners lives on in the six print books he wrote about guinea pigs, an online guinea pig book and his guinea pig website. He is also remembered by the thousands of guinea pig owners whom he helped through the years, whether directly or indirectly.

Audrey Binder is one of those people. She is a member of the Guinea Pig Daily Digest, an online mailing list that celebrates pet guinea pigs. When Gurney died in 2006, many members of the GPDD wanted to find a way to honor him.

"Many good ideas were posted, but most were either difficult or time-consuming to implement in a timely manner," Binder said. "So that Mr. Gurney's passing would be recognized promptly, I picked a date, and organized a 'memorial candle-lighting.'"

The first memorial occurred shortly after Gurney's death in July 2006. In the years since, Binder chose March 9 as the date for the memorial, because that was Gurney's birthday. The candle-lighting memorial is going strong today, three years later. It honors both Peter Gurney and all guinea pigs that have passed away.

The goal is for the memorial to be worldwide, with participants lighting a candle at 8 p.m. in their respective time zone. As people in different countries participate, the memorial light then moves around the world.

"After the Candle Lighting is over, I ask people to send me an e-mail or a post to the GPDD, telling me where they lit a candle," Binder said. "I then compile a list of all the places where candles were lit around the world. We usually get over 50 places, with most in the United States. We also have had posts from South Africa, Germany, several from the United Kingdom, Canada, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, New Zealand and Australia."

This year, Binder plans to add a new element. A world map will be posted with illuminations that show all the places that participated in the candle-lighting memorial.

"We invite everyone to join in lighting a candle. It is such a simple act that means so much," Binder said. "The light literally moves around the world as it travels through the different world time zones. It is something that really becomes universal."

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