

Trinity's Way Hosts Pet Food Drive for Late Alton Teen's Birthday

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - A local nonprofit hosted a pet food drive and cave clean-up this weekend in memory of Trinity Buel.

Trinity's Way was founded after 17-year-old Buel's passing in 2018. To celebrate her birthday on Aug. 6, the organization cleaned up litter at Piasa Park and collected pet food to donate to a local animal shelter.

"We wouldn't be here five years later if Trinity wasn't such an awesome special person," said Raina Schlueter, the organization's vice president and Buel's friend. "There's a reason we're all still here doing this. And we're still going strong."

Buel was passionate about helping animals and the environment, a legacy that Trinity's Way carries on. The nonprofit organizes a clean-up every month. They hold the pet food drive twice a year, on Buel's birthday and the anniversary of her passing in February.



Chris Unthank, the organization's president and Buel's godfather, explained that they started cleaning up the caves in Piasa Park because Buel loved spending time there but was "disgusted" by the littering. [She wrote an article](#) for Orion Magazine's ["The Place Where You Live"](#) project in which she described the beauty of the caves and her sadness to see them littered with trash. Buel often collected and disposed of the trash in the caves, so the organization is following her example.

Unthank founded the nonprofit with April Gray, Buel's mother. Gray remembers that Buel used to ask for pet food and supplies for her birthday so she could donate to local animal shelters. The pet food drive is a way to honor her passion for helping animals. They collected over 300 pounds of food this weekend.

"I don't think our love for her is ever going to diminish or go away," Schlueter added.

Trinity's Way regularly hosts community events like this weekend's. They also organize an annual music festival and collect donations for nonprofits that support animals and environmental efforts. To learn more about Trinity's Way, including how to donate or get involved, visit their [official website](#) or [Facebook page](#).

