Two cats, three dogs and six geese.

Taking care of his 11 pets was the charge Stephen Harris Cape made to his sister Diane Cape. He loved animals, and in a time of personal tragedy, taking care of his animals was his lone request.

It was a request she willingly filled, as she found homes for all 11 pets following her brother’s death in April. It also helped spur her to finalize a method to help guarantee the safety of more animals with the establishment of the Edith & Harris Cape Animal Fund through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

“Some people think ‘why should people help animals when there are other people in need?’ People have to understand the amount of good animals do for people. By helping the animals, it will help the animal’s companion,” Cape said.

Animals have been part of Cape’s life since childhood when her parents Edith and Harris brought home the first pets for her and her brother. It has continued throughout her life and currently is focused on her 16-year-old dog, Darby, and volunteering at the Animal Protective League of Springfield and Sangamon County.

“They instilled the love of animals in my brother and me,” said Cape, who has served on the APL Board for more than a decade. “My whole family is animal lovers.”

The direction of Cape’s Fund will be to protect and relieve the suffering of animals, primarily companion animals. It is also intended to create meaningful social change for the humane treatment of animals so that no animal need live in fear or pain, and to reduce the homeless population of companion animals.

“There is no end to the little ways that animals enrich people’s lives,” Diane said.

Stephen Harris Cape, who worked at Indiana University, died in April of 2010 from liver cancer. He was preceded in death by his father. Edith Cape lives in Jerome. Stephen’s death came quickly after his diagnosis.

“It was sudden. I promised him I would place his animals,” Diane Cape said.

Diane was able to place Stephen’s animals in good homes. She followed up that success with focusing on establishing a longer legacy through the Fund. The local APL is targeted to be the main beneficiary of the fund’s grants. However, over time, if a change needs to be made, the fund allows for flexibility.

“The purpose of the Fund is something I want known and I want that purpose to be active through the best agencies suited to do it,” Cape said.