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## A Tribute to Betty Christenson

Thank you all so very much for being here today and for the love and compassion you share and demonstrate for our animal brothers and sisters. It is a blessing and privilege to know each and everyone of you, and if I could speak for our animal companions, I would express their love and profound gratitude to each one of you for loving, respecting and caring for them and for improving their opportunity to live happy, healthy, peaceful and rewarding lives and to live as beloved and respected and appreciated companions and members of our lives and our society.

Each of you is so very special, as is each of the animals we work to save, protect, shelter, feed, love and provide caring and loving homes for. We all know how much joy, beauty, dignity, loyalty, devotion, humility, grace and laughter they bring as gifts to us. They are indeed family members, true friends, companions, teachers, healers and guides. We learn so much about Life and Life's Lessons from them...

And it is my belief that each of us, through our love and regard for animals, contributes in some small measure to the spiritual evolution and upliftment of all human beings and our planet as a whole. We recognize that all living beings are interconnected and that we must live together in love and respect for one another in order to preserve and perpetuate the remarkable, fragile, vulnerable, extraordinarily beautiful, simultaneously powerful and delicate Mother Earth.

Today we honor and celebrate those who live in love and respect for one another and all creatures. We also take time today to rejoice in and celebrate a very special life – the life of one human being who we are blessed and privileged to know as a friend – a person who has devoted the past years and who has given heart and soul – not to mention countless hours and tireless devotion, effort and energy toward saving the lives of and finding a safe haven for neglected, abandoned and abused dogs – Alaskan Malamutes in particular but ANY dog (or animal) in need. Her personal path has not been by any means an easy one. But she, despite the recent loss of her husband, best friend and partner of 44 years, Chris, countless physical and emotional challenges, the loss of numerous beloved friends, family members and animals that she knew, saved or cared for, and despite her own illness, she has prevailed and triumphantly provided safety, sanctuary, health and loving homes for many animals in need. She has also been friend, mentor, teacher, companion, counselor and confidante to many human beings. Of course, I am speaking of our very, very special friend, Betty Christenson.

We honor and pay homage to her perseverance, steadfastness, selflessness and generosity to and compassion for both animals and humans.

We are grateful for her commitment to us – her friends - and for her painstaking efforts to help ANYONE in need. My dogs – Kianna, Toby, Kobuck, Nenani,, Sedonia – would not be here and with us today – were it not for Betty’s effort and hard work. And whether it is Betty’s beloved Sugar Bear, Lobo, Alaska, Mariah, Chompay, Pearl & Buck, Doogie, Fritz, Skookums, J.J., Jessie, Caleb, Tacomah, Innoko , Beau, etc. who have actually been “saved” or “championed” in some way by Betty, it is not just they but all of us who are indebted to Betty for improving life for each of us.

In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson,  
“It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.” And we know how much joy and fulfillment Betty gets through her work. Betty has won our loving support, friendship, appreciation, praise and recognition as a result of her effort to be of help to each and every one of us in some way or another... And so we have set aside this afternoon to thank all of you here for the wonderful work you do and for the contribution you make on behalf of all living beings. In particular, we thank Betty Christenson for the remarkable woman and gentle, loving, loyal, feisty and persevering spirit that is hers for us to admire and emulate.

We thank you, Betty, with all our hearts for all you do and are. We thank you also for your sense of humor and spirit of fun and mischief - which makes even the most difficult and challenging situations acceptable and survivable. Not only do you bless and uplift our lives, but you help make the world a kinder, more loving, compassionate and beautiful place in which to live..... We continue to be inspired by your example and pray that we, too, may be of blessing and benefit to each other and the animals with whom we share our lives and our planet.

May God bless and sustain you and your work Betty, as well as our work together.

Amen.