

MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Novel Helps Kids Make Right Choices for Pets

Artemesia Publishing announces the 2009 release of *Belle's Star* by Farmington, New Mexico author Connie Gotsch. Written from a dog's point of view, *Belle's Star* teaches children ages 8 to 12 how to treat animals. The story also helps them build new lives after escaping difficult situations themselves.

Darcy, a spunky soccer playing girl, and her Aunt Ellen rescue Belle from abusive owners and offer her love. Belle has never met a kind human. Living with Darcy terrifies her. Other people and animals, including a cat, teach her about trust. Her adventures with these colorful characters help kids face painful issues.

Award winning journalist and retired elementary school counselor Margaret Cheesebro has designed an activities booklet for *Belle's Star*. The booklet will be available in downloadable form upon purchase of the novel through Artemesia Publishing.

The guide can assist in small group and classroom sessions designed by veterinarians, members of animal organizations, pet store owners, and animal shelter workers to help elementary school students learn pet care. Home schooling parents, who like to read and discuss stories with kids, can use the guide. Families can work on projects that foster strong community ties.

Counselors, teachers, community youth leaders and religious leaders can also use the guide to help kids deal with abuse and bullying.

Belle's Star author Connie Gotsch says, "Black Beauty meets Oliver Twist best describes this book. In an entertaining way, the story empowers children-- especially girls--to make good life choices."

Ms. Gotsch has published two award-winning adult novels. In 2007 she received the New Mexico Press Women's Communicator of Achievement Award. She holds an Ed.D in Leadership and Policy Studies with an emphasis on educational media from Northern Illinois University, and works in public radio.

To pre-order or learn more about *Belle's Star* contact Artemesia Publishing at info@artemesiapublishing.com or 1-505-286-0892.

Animal Abuse a Serious Problem In the United States

- Pet Abuse.com reports 7483 cases of dog abuse, and 2462 cases of cat abuse in the United States in the first six months of 2008.
- The Utah Humane Society reports that in 2006 282 animal cruelty investigations in 2006 involved 2,178 dogs, cats, and other wild and domestic animals. In 2007, Two-hundred-ninety-nine investigations involved 1,623 animals

Animal Abuse Relates to Human Abuse

- In a New Jersey study of families reported for child abuse, in 88 percent of these families at least one person had abused animals. Studies by Ascione and Quinlisk reported 74 percent of women in several shelters in Wisconsin and Utah said that their abuser had threatened, injured, or killed a companion animal.

Bullying and Child Abuse are Serious Problems Too

- According to Childhelp, a nationwide resource for abused children and their caregivers, 4 children a day died of abuse in 2006. That's 1,500 for the year. An estimated 906,000 American children were victims of abuse and neglect. Three-million cases of child abuse were reported. See www.childhelp.org
- The UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre reports that child abuse leads to 3,500 annual deaths in developed nations. The American rate of death from abuse is 10-15 times higher than European countries.
- According to a 2003 Nevada Survey, an estimated 906,000 children were determined to be victims of child abuse and neglect in the United States. This equates to a victimization rate of 12.4 per 1,000 children in the population.
- According to the same study, approximately 2.9 million referrals concerning the welfare of an estimated 5.5 million children were made to child protective service agencies.

Excerpt from Belle's Star

“Should you look directly at her?” Margaret prompted.

“Oh, probably not. Dogs see that as a threat, don't they?” Darcy looked at her hands.

“Come on, Belle.”

Could I believe what I thought I heard? Margaret actually understood dogs? Darcy was learning to? Creeping forward, I touched the edge of the crate with my nose.

Darcy shifted. Her wheeled shoes clicked. I scuttled back into the cage.

“She's scared of my skates,” Darcy exclaimed. She unlaced the shoes, pulled them off, and shoved them under the chair where Ellen sat.

“Okay, Belle. Now come on.”

I caught the faint odor of her socks and slightly sweaty feet. Wow! She was really trying to comfort me. I inched to the door again. Then taking a deep breath, I hopped onto the rug.

Sample Discussion Questions Chapter 7

How can you help someone know you understand them? Choose the method you think will work best and explain your choice. Ask yourself how you would feel if someone responded to you in one of these ways.

- A. Say, “It sounds like you feel confused.” If the person seems to feel something different than confusion, name the emotion you think the person is feeling.
- B. Say, “I felt like that once.” Then launch into a story of your own experience.
- C. Tell the person to quit thinking about the unpleasant or sad thing.
- D. Tell them it's stupid to feel upset or scared.

ACTIVITY

Visit an animal shelter in your town. Volunteer some time to help feed the animals there. As you feed each one, speak in a kind voice to let them know you are there to help, not hurt them. Notice how they react. You may have to spend a longer time with some animals before they begin to trust you. When you get home, share your experiences with your family.