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## **Dog's Saga Prompts Book, PAWS Support**

by Caroline Connors

Beverly resident Connie J. Burnet could be called a dog's best friend.

When her 7-year old Sheltie, Sander, was diagnosed with a malignant tumor on the roof of his mouth in October 1998, Burnet opted to spare him the pain and discomfort of surgery, chemotherapy or radiation treatments. Instead, she turned her back on the conventional course of treatment and began giving him herbal dietary supplements and feeding him a home-prepared raw diet that included lean meats, leafy green vegetables and fish. Under Burnet's care, Sander began visiting a chiropractor and acupuncturist regularly and stopped receiving annual vaccinations.

Although a veterinarian had told Burnet that her dog had only weeks to live, Sander defied the odds and continued to live another seven years. Five months before his 15th birthday, Sander died, but not of cancer, Burnet said.

"He died of liver disease and old age, but it was not painful or traumatic," Burnet said. "It was like he had finished a marathon."

After Sander's death, Burnet acted on the suggestion of a veterinary oncologist and wrote a book that she hopes will help other dog owners raise happy and healthy pets. Burnet appeared at Archer Bank, 3435 W. 111th St., on March 22 to sell and sign copies of her recently published book entitled "Sander's Book: The Education of a Dog Owner." She was accompanied at the bank by her 10-year old Sheltie, Sundance, also known as Sunny.

"The book is all the things I had learned in the seven years of caring for Sander," Burnet said. "I had good recollections of it, and it had an ending that I felt good about."

According to Burnet, who is a compliance investigations manager for the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, the thousands of hours spent on Internet research and the thousands of dollars spent on holistic treatment were not in vain; her time and money had proven results for Sander and have also benefited the health of the five Shelties that she currently owns.

"The three Shelties that I have raised from puppies have never been sick," Burnet said. "I take them to the vet once a year, but they have had few vaccinations. A good quality diet and good health are the best ways to build a healthy immune system."

She remains committed to a raw diet and herbal supplements for her pets, including an herbal concoction to repel fleas. She warns against annual vaccinations, which she believes can do more harm than good.

"Like so many dog owners, I had no idea of the hazards. The DHLPPC vaccinations [distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, parvovirus and coronavirus] are a recipe for disaster -- only two of these diseases are potentially fatal and only one of them to puppies," Burnet said.

She added that a 3-year shot is now endorsed by all 27 veterinary schools in the U.S. and by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Burnet, who said that Sander's journey inspired her to stop smoking and begin exercising and taking vitamins, is donating the profits of her book to PAWS (Pets Are Worth Saving) Chicago, a non-profit organization that operates a cage-free shelter/adoption center and a free spay/neuter clinic for pets of low-income owners. A check for \$779 was sent to PAWS from proceeds of the book sales in February, Burnet said.

“I like their philosophy and their mission statement,” Burnet said. “They are a force for no-kill and are huge on education.”

PAWS Chicago was founded by Peter and Paula Fasseas, the chairman and vice-chairman of the Metropolitan Bank Group, which owns Archer Bank. All 16 branches of Archer Bank, including the Mt. Greenwood branch, are pet-friendly, said Assistant Vice President Nancy Merlo. Customers are encouraged to bring their dogs into the building while conducting their banking, Merlo said.

Burnet is selling “Sander’s Book” for \$13, which includes Illinois sales tax, from her web site at [cinnamondog.com](http://cinnamondog.com). The book is also available at It’s A Dog’s Life dog bakery, 3440 W. 111th St., in Mt. Greenwood, and at My Sister’s Knits, 9907 S. Walden Pkwy., in Beverly.