

MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Novel Helps Kids Make Good Life Choices

Artemesia Publishing announces the August 2009 release of *Belle's Star* a youth novel by Farmington, New Mexico author Connie Gotsch. Written from a dog's point of view, *Belle's Star* empowers children ages 8 to 12 to build new lives after escaping bullying and abuse or other difficult situations.

When Big Toby and his father, Bonehead throw Belle out of their truck at a convenience store, 12 year-old Darcy and her Auntie Ellen rescue the frightened puppy. They show Belle kindness and offer her a life with love and security. However Belle thinks no human is worth trusting. Darcy's family and their pets, including a cat, try to show Belle otherwise. Will she realize that though she cannot change her past, she *can* put it aside and build a future full of happiness? When Bonehead and Big Toby reappear and threaten Darcy, the girl's survival depends on the choice Belle makes.

Written in the first person from a dog's point of view, *Belle's Star* empowers young people who have escaped abuse and bullying to build new lives. Adventure and colorful characters help these children face painful issues, and find the strength to heal.

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

Margaret says, "Belle's Star would be a great tool for counselors who want to help elementary school students understand abuse and deal with it effectively. *Belle's Star* is a great tool for home school teachers. It's also helpful for parents who like to read to their kids and have meaningful discussions about the story. The discussion questions and activities at the end of each chapter make this book very helpful for use in small group counseling and classroom guidance activities. In addition, the learning activities provide wonderful opportunities for families to work together on a joint project that promotes stronger family ties and benefits the community."

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.

Why are Bullying and Abuse Important to Combat?

- 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.

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.

Excerpt from Belle's Star

[Buster is Darcy's other dog, and Painter belongs to Aunt Ellen. Bonehead and Big Toby are Belle's abusers:]

Darcy screamed.

He flung dirt at her mouth.

The hair on my scruff rose. How dare he do that?

Water churned. Painter popped up with Buster on his shoulders. Buster gagged and gulped. Painter supported him. Big Toby hurled another rock at them.

Bonehead snatched Darcy's free hand. "I'll throw you in the lake," he growled.

She couldn't fight him forever. I had to take a risk and help her. But what in dog heaven could I do?

Misty spat in Bonehead's direction. "If I had claws..." she hissed, teeth gleaming against her gums.

I looked at the white points. An idea exploded in my mind. "Misty! Could you hang on to a person's clothes with your teeth?"

"I suppose. Why?" She stared at me.

"Then we'll both attack Big Toby and Bonehead. They won't be able to help each other. Maybe Darcy, Painter, and Buster can run."

She arched her back. "You think that will work?"

"I've no idea. But we've got to try. Come on."

Sample Discussion Questions

Have you ever had to come to the defense of someone who was being mistreated? If so, how did you feel about it?

Belle used her herding skills to help save Darcy. Everyone has at least one skill they can use to help others. What is one skill that you have?

In school there are rules about not fighting. Is there ever a time when it's okay to fight?