

Bark (& Purr) Out Loud!

Sarasota Pet and Manatee Pet are pleased to include "Bark (& Purr) Out Loud," a special feature that spotlights important events & happenings in our local pet community. If it's making headlines, you'll read about it here!



A Loving Tribute to a Rescued Shelter Cat

"Sneaker & Me" by Barbara Bounds Now Available for Purchase

In every animal lover's life, there often is one extraordinary pet that touches the life of its owner unlike any other.

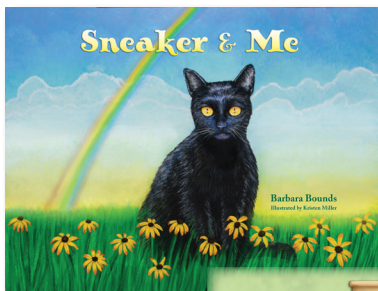
This beloved animal, often referred to as a "heart dog" or a "heart cat," becomes so much more than a family member...he or she is a companion, a confidante and a best friend.

While others that came before or after these special animals also are loved, this pet—this very special pet—is always remembered and forever missed, long after he or she makes the journey to the "Rainbow Bridge."

For Sarasota resident Barbara Bounds, her "heart cat" is a black rescue kitty she named "Sneaker."

Although it has been more than 10 years since she passed and other cats since have been become part of the Bounds' family, Sneaker still is never far from Barbara's thoughts.

And so, as a very special tribute to her dearly loved cat, Barbara has written her first book titled, "Sneaker and Me."



The soft-cover book, which is beautifully illustrated by local artist Kristen Miller, takes readers on a heartwarming journey from the day Sneaker was adopted to her last days by Barbara's side. Both humorous and poignant, the book details

many of the moments Barbara shared with Sneaker, how she chose the kitty's name and the heartfelt and enduring bond that developed through the years.

Perhaps, most importantly, the book also underscores responsible pet ownership and the importance of making a lifelong commitment to any

animal one chooses to bring into his or her family.

Adopted from the Humane Society of Sarasota County, Sneaker lived a long life—a little more than 20 years—and was Barbara's "shadow" for so many important moments in her life, including the birth of her two children.

Barbara knows without a doubt that Sneaker chose her on the day she visited the animal shelter in Sarasota so many years ago. She was

adamant about not bringing home a black cat—she admits that, at the time, she was a bit superstitious—but something about this cat, who had been given the name "Blackie," tugged at her heartstrings.

"I remember one of the volunteers telling me that Blackie had lost a litter of kittens, and I truly felt bad for her," Barbara recalls. "So, I played with her for a little while, but then we put her back in the caged area, and I continued my search."

Of course, Blackie wanted no part of that. She climbed up the wire "walls" of the caged area and cried loudly and continuously until Barbara had no choice but to take her out and hold her again.

This clearly was a relationship that was meant to be.

For Barbara, chronicling Sneaker's life in the pages of her new book has brought a mix of both happiness in remembering so many moments she and Sneaker enjoyed and heartache at the profound loss she still feels every day.

But by writing the book, Barbara also wanted to share her experience with others who are grieving the loss of their pets, many of whom she is in contact with every day.

Since 1988, Barbara and her husband, Raymond, have been the owners of Belspur Oaks Pet Crematory, located at 2122 Whitfield Park Avenue in Sarasota. The family-owned business serves both individual animal owners, as well as veterinary practices in Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, Hillsborough and Pinellas counties.

With nearly three decades of experience, Belspur Oaks has earned an unparalleled reputation as "Southwest Florida's most trusted destination in a pet's journey to the Rainbow Bridge."

In her experience assisting thousands of grieving pet owners in making final arrangements for their pets through the years, Barbara says that she often has been asked if she has pets of her own and if she has ever experienced the passing of a beloved pet.

"It always helps our clients to know that we, too, have loved and lost animals in our lives," Barbara says. "There is a unique bond that develops between people when grief is shared. And, because of our love of animals, our clients are assured that their pets will be handled with both compassion and dignity."

In addition to her work at Belspur Oaks Pet Crematory, Barbara is a regular contributor to *Sarasota Pet* and *Manatee Pet* magazines, writing about love, loss and the grieving process, while addressing the many ways animal lovers can memorialize their pets.

Barbara also is an accomplished violinist, who plays with several local orchestras and groups, including The Pops Orchestra, The Sounds of Glory at Church of the Palms and The Palm Strings Quartet.

And now, Barbara can add book author to her list of achievements.

Copies of *Sneaker & Me* are available online at www.belspuroaks.com for \$9.95 each in a soft-cover format. You also can purchase the book online in e-book format for \$2.99 by visiting www.amazon.com/dp/B00Q28TJCY or by scanning the QR code at right.

