

Palm Beach Daily News

Palm Beach Daily News, Monday, November 28, 2016

LIFE-CHANGING LUKE

Rambunctious rescue dog who survived the odds inspires book series

By JANIS FONTAINE

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Once a teacher, always a teacher?

In Susan Beattie's case, yes.

Beattie, a native of Palm Beach, is a former elementary school teacher turned children's book author. It happened the way things often do: by accident.

Beattie's son, Greg, adopted a puppy from Big Dog Ranch Rescue, a no-kill rescue nonprofit, then in Wellington.

The puppy and its siblings had been left in a box beside the road. They had parvo, a deadly virus that causes vomiting, fever and diarrhea, with a mortality rate over 90 percent.

But somehow, Greg nursed the pup back to health, and Luke grew into a handsome, shiny, long-legged black Labrador with huge, soulful brown eyes.



Allen Eyestone / The Palm Beach Post

Susan Beattie, seen on the Lake Trail, wrote a children's book about her rescue dog, Luke, and it has turned into a hugely popular series.

At the time, Beattie was working with her son in his Palm Beach jewelry store, where Luke became the official door greeter. He even sported a red tie.

Everyone wanted to know Luke's story, so Beattie finally made postcards with "Luke's Story" on them. And like it does in "Wonderland," things grew.

Luke's story grew into Beattie's first book, with illustrations by Palm Beach artist Sandra Thompson.

Beattie took Luke to book signings and holiday events, and, before long, she started taking Luke into schools.

Not only do school children read *Luke's Story*, Beattie also teaches them how to be responsible pet owners.

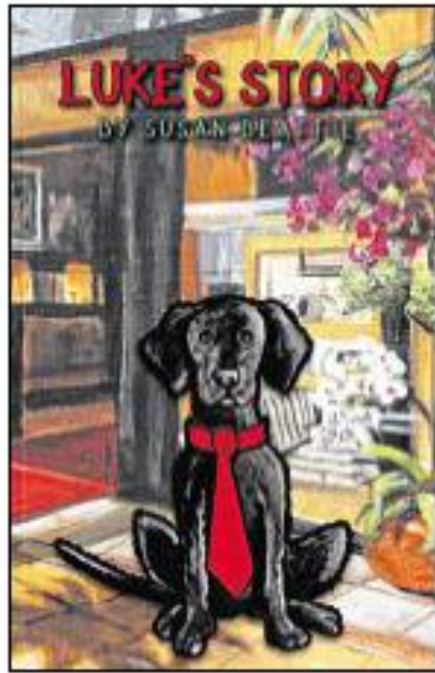
"It brought me all the joy of teaching," Beattie said.

Layer upon layer, Beattie's inspiration grew. She made a documentary about writing a children's book and began to teach that craft to students. She brainstormed ideas and wrote plans for the next book. She made vocabulary lists and wrote lesson plans.

Luke's Story won a President's Award from the Florida Authors & Publishers Association in 2014, and Beattie was a finalist for the Score Palm

Beach Entrepreneur of the Year. Her school visits were sanctioned by the School District of Palm Beach County and approved by the RedRover Readers Program for books with humane education themes.

Beattie's books also educate people about local rescues, sanctuaries, shelters and conservation groups. At the end of each book, several pages are crammed with photos and information about the tireless workers who care for the sick and injured animals at Busch Wildlife Sanctuary, Loggerhead Marinelife Center, Rescue-Life Sanctuary, Big Dog Ranch Rescue, Tri-County Animal Rescue. Palm



Beach Island Cats is featured, too.

Beattie, 62, has four books completed. In addition to *Luke's Story*, she has three fictional adventures, *Luke's Gold Rush Adventure*, *Luke's Shipwreck Treasure*

Voyage and Luke's Orient Express Journey.

Ten more books are planned. The main characters are still her son Greg and beloved sidekick Luke, who travel the world solving mysteries. Each book starts with someone bringing an unusual piece of jewelry into Greg's shop. A ring or watch or tiara sends the duo on an adventure where Greg "researches" and "teaches" Luke about people and places they visit.

Beattie knows there's a demand for books like hers, and there's also a need.

"Kids desperately need wholesome stories," she said.

jfontaine@pbpost.com

Twitter: @janisfontaine