

Champion for helping others receives Honorary Doctorate at winter Convocation

A champion for innovative cancer research with a passion for helping others will be honoured with an honorary doctorate from the University of Guelph during winter convocation on February 18.

Suzi Beber exemplifies what a caring person can do to make a difference. After suffering serious injuries following routine surgery, Beber welcomed a golden retriever puppy named Blues into her life. Blues helped Beber with the emotional and physical challenges associated with her recovery but unfortunately was diagnosed with cancer at a young age. Blues was treated at the Ontario Veterinary College and lived for a year after his diagnosis. To honour his memory, and in gratitude for the care he received, Beber created the Smiling Blue Skies Cancer Fund.



This fund has been supporting [OVC Pet Trust](#)'s quest to find more and better ways to deal with and understand the complex and devastating disease of cancer.

Smiling Blue Skies began with modest beginnings in 2001 and has grown into a network of dedicated supporters that spans North American and Europe.

Through Beber's tireless efforts, the Smiling Blue Skies Fund has raised more than \$1.6 million dollars for OVC Pet Trust through the Smiling Blue Skies Walks to End Canine Cancer held in cities and towns across the country, Woof-Fit Triathlons, fundraisers connected to agility competitions, the sale of a cookbook written by Beber and jewelry she designed, as well as the

extensive network of people who have been connected to Pet Trust and OVC through Beber and Smiling Blue Skies.

In 2013, she was presented with a Canadian Diamond Jubilee medal by the Governor-General.

Her support of OVC Pet Trust has helped OVC advance the prevention and treatment of cancer through initiatives such as: validation of a blood test to diagnose hemangiosarcoma, a highly aggressive cancer; development of Canada's first cancer registry for companion animals; investigation of novel cancer treatments and approaches, providing much needed seed money for research that can be difficult to obtain from traditional grant funding sources; funding for a new clinical trials co-ordinator position at the Institute for Comparative Cancer Investigation, at the University of Guelph, supporting more than a dozen new trials; and continuing education opportunities for veterinarians, including updates in oncology.

In addition to the thousands of volunteer hours Beber contributes annually to raise funds for OVC's Pet Trust, she also recognizes the need for compassionate support for pet owners dealing with the loss of a beloved animal and makes herself available to people who need an empathetic friend during a difficult time.

Beber will receive her honorary degree during convocation ceremonies on **Thursday, February 18 at 1 p.m. in War Memorial Hall.**