

Catch Up With Authors Lynn Buzhardt and Sue Steib

Learn more about the inspiration behind their book "Can We Have One? A Parent's Guide to Raising Kids With Cats and Dogs."

By Stacy N. Hackett

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1. What was your inspiration behind the book?

Sue Steib with cat Jolie and dog Travis The two of us have been friends for a long time, and we often discuss our own pets during our frequent visits. We both love kids and animals. One of us is in a profession dealing with pets, the other with families and children, so we decided it was a natural collaboration. Through the years, we each have had an opportunity to see the best and the worst of experiences in family pet ownership. We hope that "Can We Have One?" will help more families and animals have a positive experience.

2. What was the most difficult part of writing the book?

Probably finding and sifting through the research — interesting, but sometimes tedious as well and fraught with frustration that there is not more hard science about the effects of pets on child well-being and development. The other was simply finding the time as we both have "real jobs" that require a lot of hours.

3. What was the most rewarding part of writing the book?

The support and input from friends and family — especially their willingness to be subjects for all of the photos included in the book — and, of course, finally seeing it in print. That was a thrill!

4. What type of feedback have you received so far?

Lynn Buzhardt, DVM, with cat Briggs Expectant parents are excited about having a one-stop source of information and are happy that they can accomplish so much before the baby is born. One new mother said her pregnant friends were waiting for her to pass her copy along to them.

5. What is your writing process?

We broke down the chapters based on our respective areas of expertise, then reviewed each other's work. Each chapter contains contributions from us both, although one may have taken the lead. Lynn is a parent and Sue is not, so Lynn vetted the chapter focused on managing child-pet interaction to be sure it reflected real life with kids, not just the academic perspective. Sue has owned more pets, so was able to contribute additional examples to the chapters on pet care and protecting the family from animal-borne illness. Sue also called upon her experience in social work and child development to create the chapter on the benefits of growing up with pets.

6. Do you have any other books?

Not yet, but we have manuscripts in draft for two children's books. Our goal is to publish books for kids that illustrate the key points in "Can We Have One?" about the benefits of pets for children. One book will feature a cat and the other a dog.

7. Do you own a cat or other pets?

Yes, we each have both. Lynn has both a dog and a cat, and Sue has three dogs and two cats.

8. Do your pets influence your writing?

Absolutely! Many of the experiences reflected in the book and the situations about which we warn pet owners (and potential pet owners) come from years of having lived with dogs and cats ourselves. Living with dogs and cats provides a constant source of entertaining, educational stories.

Stacy N. Hackett shares her Southern California home with two adorable Cornish Rex cats, Carson and Evita, and a playful tabby named Jackson.