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Owner seeks aid for canine cancer treatment



Connie Sylvania with Chloe, who needs costly cancer treatments

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Connie Sylvania's choice was to ask for donations or let a malignant tumor grow in the mouth of her dog, Chloe.

She decided to ask. Chloe, a 2-year-old mix of miniature pinscher and Chihuahua, is now registered with the Magic Bullet Fund, an organization that helps owners seek donations for their dogs' cancer treatments.

Yes, fundraising for medical care extends to animals.

"There's certainly a need out there," said veterinarian Don Mann of Delaware County. "The treatments can be really expensive."

In 2005, the Magic Bullet Fund (www.themagicbulletfund.org) was founded by Laurie Kaplan of New York. She named it for her dog, Bullet, a Siberian husky who survived lymphoma because Kaplan was able to get chemotherapy for him. (Four years later, he died of unrelated causes at age 13.)

The experience prompted Kaplan to write a book of advice for pet owners in the same situation and also to start the fund. She quickly learned that not everyone finds it appropriate to raise money for pet cancer treatments when some humans go without medical care.

"I definitely do get hate email once in a while, some very vicious comments that I can't even say in mixed company."

She points out that treating dogs for cancer has helped doctors better understand how to treat humans.

Sylvania, an East Side woman who is disabled because of rheumatoid arthritis, discovered the tumor in Chloe's mouth a few weeks ago.

She took the dog to Mann, who operated to reduce the size of the tumor so the dog could eat and breathe without obstruction. But he couldn't completely remove it, so Chloe is expected to need radiation treatments. They typically cost \$300 to \$400 each at the Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center.

"We just didn't have the money," said Sylvania, whose husband, Jim, is a retired private investigator. (OSU has a Good Samaritan Fund that helps pay for some emergency medical care but typically not cancer.)

So Mrs. Sylvania searched the Internet for organizations that might help. She quickly learned that, although several such organizations exist, most won't help dogs with cancer because the severity of the disease makes



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it unlikely that the animal will live long.

But the Magic Bullet Fund will help, provided the dog is young and the owners agree to participate in fundraising by calling family members and friends. Their story is posted on the fund's website for 30 days.

The average amount raised is about \$1,200. It goes directly to the veterinary facility.

So far, Chloe's appeal for about \$2,500 has attracted \$515 in donations, with a little more than a week to go before it leaves the website.

Chloe, who likes to perch on a table near a window to bark at visitors, has recovered from surgery and is eating normally. But Mrs. Sylvania knows that the cancer lingers.

"She's doing very well, but I'm just afraid that it's going to get a lot worse. I'd like to get her treated as quickly as I could."

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