

FOREWORD

The special healing powers of a dog named Sophie

By Laura T. Coffey

Oh, how I wish I could have met Sophie.

But fortunately for me — and for everybody else — Sophie comes to life in the pages of this beautiful book, where she will continue to comfort and heal perceptive humans for many years to come.

Sophie loved to play and have fun, but she also loved to work. The rough-coated Collie spent more than a dozen years of her life smiling, listening, and strengthening patients at hospitals and nursing homes in Naperville, Illinois. The role of therapy dogs in hospital settings has been growing fast across the United States; medical professionals can see how much these well-trained dogs reduce stress and cheer people up when they're feeling low. Sophie helped blaze that trail at an unusually young age for a therapy dog, and her legacy and undeniable impact are captured perfectly in *Sophie ... Best Friends Are Forever*.

As much as this is a book about a remarkable dog with remarkable healing powers, it's also a story about the love and dedication of the dog's handler. I've had the privilege of getting to know author Ted Slupik and his wife, Bernie, and let me tell you something: They are good eggs. Dog lovers everywhere will appreciate the hilariously charming details that emerge in this book and reveal just how much Ted and Bernie adore dogs. They coordinate fun vacation itineraries — for their dogs; they tackle remodeling projects to make home life more enjoyable — for their dogs; they take their furry friends to work and put thought into the timing and variety of special snacks — for their dogs. As you read along and see the Slupiks going to such lengths to keep their dogs happy and comfortable, you're bound to find yourself chuckling and cheering them on.

The Slupiks' big-heartedness and generosity become clear in other ways as well: through their creation of Lizzy's Fund, a philanthropic effort to provide full veterinary, dental, and grooming care for senior dogs in shelter environments and help the dogs find homes; through the thousands of hours of volunteer time Ted and Sophie logged together doing therapy work for people who really needed their

visits; and through Ted and Bernie's willingness to learn valuable lessons from dogs, who really do have so much to teach us. Throughout this book, Ted repeatedly reveals just how carefully he was listening whenever Sophie had something important to convey. Beautiful lessons emerge about compassion, contentment, priorities in life — and, most importantly, about love.

Yes, *Sophie ... Best Friends Are Forever* is a love story — the kind of story anyone who's known the love of a dog will appreciate. It's a joy to become immersed in this story and come to know a dog as special and as unforgettable as Sophie. What a good, good girl.

*Laura T. Coffey is the author of the bestselling book *My Old Dog: Rescued Pets with Remarkable Second Acts*. She's also a longtime writer, editor, and producer for TODAY.com, the website of NBC's TODAY show. An award-winning journalist with more than two decades of experience, Laura has written and edited hundreds of high-profile human-interest stories. She lives in Seattle, Washington. Her website is www.MyOldDogBook.com.*