



SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION

by Suzi Beber



Suzi Beber founded The Smiling Blue Skies® Cancer Fund in 2001 after losing her Golden Retriever, Blues, to lymphoma. To honour his memory, and in gratitude for the care he received at OVC, Smiling Blue Skies has raised more than \$3 million to support OVC Pet Trust's quest to find more and better ways to deal with canine cancer.

In photo: The attendees of the 20th Annual Smiling Blue Skies Walk for Canine Cancer in Calgary, Alberta. Photo provided by Avey Christiansen.

Memories from Coast to Coast

Maya Angelou said, "I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver."

An amazing era ended on May 7, 2023, when Calgary held its final Smiling Blue Skies Walk for Canine Cancer. Imagine a brightly coloured THANK YOU banner with flashing lights and stardust, and that only provides a hint of the true "awesomeness" of the Calgary team and everything they have accomplished! While this was the 20th anniversary of the Calgary event, for the past 14 years, Mary Shillabeer and Leanne Tucker (and Carolyn Tucker too) have been at the helm. Imagine, \$47,000 was raised for 2023, but \$386,185 has been raised over the past 14 years! Thank you to everyone from coast to coast who supported Calgary for all these years!

On June 17, 2023, Tina and her team were on the other side of the country in Barrie, Ontario, raising \$5,350 at their very first golf tournament, held at Bear Creek Golf Club. Thank you so much for the community's support of this event, from sponsors to volunteers.

There have always been less than six degrees of separation between Smiling Blue Skies and the support of agility clubs across Canada. Thanks to everyone

at the summer trial hosted by Capital Comets Dog Sports on Vancouver Island, \$6,464 was raised from another year of fabulous auction tables and delicious meals. Thank you to Kathy and Carol, Cindy and Gwen, Ali and Paul, and everyone who attended the weekend of trials, making this event such a shining success.

This year's Agility Association of Canada Nationals were hosted by Wendy, Erika, and Christine, in Maxville, Ontario. The event raised \$2,605, and it was really special to see daily updates, photos of the raffle tables and Rainbow Bridge dogs, and wonderful videos of runs - sometimes coming from Sharon, whom I first met through Golden Rescue, back in the 90s. Decades later, we were hugging each other at the Nationals right here in British Columbia.

Thanks to Erin and Eromit Labs for hosting another year of Dock Diving's "Western Cup Challenge." \$7,666 was raised for Smiling Blue Skies this year! The always-amazing Tennis Ball Draw alone, with 223 tennis balls, raised \$4,460! The prizes were fantastic, and included online training courses, baskets packed with goods, and swag bags for all. Thanks to everyone who was a part of this special event.

New this year is the Canine Performance Events' Can/Am Challenge, hosted by Bay De Noc Kennel Club and Bark Avenue Remarkable K9s. With over 700 runs, 60 dogs and handlers, and - thanks to Joan Richard - auctions each day, this promises to be a very exciting time for all the participants.

We said goodbye to another amazing event at the end of October. After over a decade of spearheading special fundraising activities, Linda Sowerby and her crew held their final "Live + Sociable" evening. This year's event brought everyone in attendance back to Smiling Blue Skies' beginnings in beautiful Oakville, Ontario, at the Bronte Legion, home to our "Bronte Blues." This was an evening of great music (something for everyone) and food, and there was a terrific raffle too. \$7150 was raised during this very special "closing" event.

Your giving hearts and souls are helping ALL of us in so many ways, from funding studies and grants to clinical positions, including the coordinator position for the OVC Veterinary Biobank, which supports research that improves the lives of both the precious pets and people in our lives. Whoever thought we would cross the \$3 million threshold!

"Long live blue skies, where Hope is a kite and dreams really do come true." 🐾

"THERE WILL ALWAYS BE SMILING BLUE SKIES" smilingblueskies.com