



Elle & Coach, a Book Review by Terry O'Rourke



Terry and Norm

Diabetes diagnoses packs a punch. One delivered to Elle and her family turned their family upside down. Elle was eight years old at the time, the oldest of four children of Stefany and Craig Shaheen. The family lived a comfortable middle-class lifestyle in New Hampshire with both parents professionally employed. Elle's grandmother is Jeanne Shaheen, a U.S. Senator representing New Hampshire.

Stefany Shaheen, Elle's mom, writes a moving story entitled *Elle & Coach* with the tagline, *Diabetes, the Fight for My Daughter's Life, and the Dog Who Changed Everything*. The diabetes diagnosis seems to come out of nowhere with Stefany's awareness only peripherally informed by Craig's brother, a type I diabetic.

The diabetics among us each have our personal diagnosis stories but reading about Elle's diagnosis through her mother's eyes resonates much with what we all experienced. The aching vulnerability, the realization of our woeful diabetes ignorance accompanied by a raging sense of injustice.

The diagnosis

The primary care doctor's reluctance to even test Elle's blood sugar needlessly delays the impending diagnosis. Elle's symptoms are classic: unexplained weight loss, insatiable thirst, uncharacteristic academic difficulty in school along with trouble seeing the classroom blackboard. Stefany, alarmed by a conversation with her diabetic brother-in-law, finally persuades the doctor to "humor her" and do the test.

Elle and family receive the fateful news and the story quickly proceeds to the hospital stay and the family's attempt to learn all they can about diabetes and insulin. We all can remember that tidal wave of information we attempt to absorb, like drinking water from a fire-hose!

The story takes many turns as the parents seek to restore a semblance of a "new normal" to their young family. They adopt the typical night-time finger-stick ritual now common with so many young families as a way to deal with the safety threat using insulin poses. As much as these parents try to insure Elle's safety, the inevitable and horrifying scenes of hypoglycemia seizure batter and undermine their confidence.

Continued on Page 3

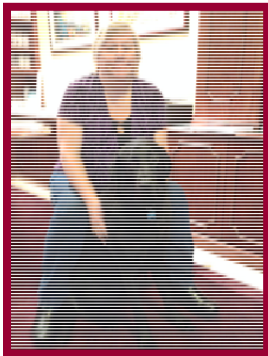
Inside This Issue

<i>Carol's Conner</i>	2
<i>Vet Report</i>	2
<i>Fund Raising</i>	3
<i>Client Interview</i>	5
<i>A Trainer's View</i>	4
<i>New Recruits</i>	6



St. Stephen's Catholic Church
Parish Hall
451 Eucalyptus Drive
San Francisco, CA 94132

[Directions](#)

Carol's Corner by Carol Edwards

Carol and Bozeman

November is Diabetes Awareness month. Most diabetics don't need any more awareness of their chronic disease than they already have. I think this month is for us in the diabetic community to make others outside of the community more aware of what life is like with this disease and how a DAD can help with that. The completely unpredictable nature of the disease is hard to articulate. To say you can do everything exactly the same each day (eat, sleep, exercise, etc.) and have different blood glucose results is the tip of the diabetes iceberg.

In the book *Elle & Coach* Stefany Shaheen did a great job of documenting life post diagnoses. The incredible amount of information to absorb and make sense of without making a mistake that could have disastrous results. The new normal which turns the whole family upside down and puts diabetes in the forefront of everyone's mind. Sleepless nights. Not understanding where that blood glucose number came from. Just as you emerge from the cloud the next curve ball hits. It's a constant balancing act.

Once Coach, a DAD, is on the scene he brings a calm to the family. It's one of the benefits of having a DAD that I think is overlooked often. They don't change the course of the disease but they can round the sharp edges out of it. They truly become a partner in keeping their diabetic safe. Working toward the same goal but using a skill set we humans do not have. So I hope that this November you take a little time to try and understand what a diabetic goes through on a daily basis and understand how a DAD helps with it.

[Contact us to suggest future topics!](#)

Vet Notes by Dr. Kim Bercovitz

A little over a month ago my standard poodle "bloat" and almost died. I realized when talking to clients over the next couple weeks that no one knew the signs to look for. The proper medical term for bloat is Gastric dilatation and volvulus (GDV). This is when the stomach fills with gas and rotates or twists on itself. The stomach torsion/twisting causes other organs and structures in the abdomen to lose blood supply. This causes damage to the organs.

This is fatal if not treated both promptly and appropriately. Even with the best treatment it is estimated 20% of patients will die. Fast recognition that there is a problem and early treatment are the keys to survival.

We don't know the cause of GDV, but it happens most often (but not exclusively) to larger deep chested dogs, which puts our service dogs in the category of "at risk". Other risk factors include eating rapidly, intestinal disease, foreign bodies (when they eat something that isn't food), cancers and old age. It hasn't been proven, but exercise after eating has been discussed.

My dog didn't eat dinner well but when I examined him he seemed normal, and came to bed just like every other night. That evening he paced a little then gagged/retched. Nothing came out. One of the big signs of GDV is frequent retching or trying to vomit.



Abdominal X-ray pre surgery

Continued on page 6



Fundraising

Bookmark smile.amazon.com

Support your favorite organization every time you shop.

Make your online shopping count!

Holiday shopping online? If you're using Amazon.com (and honestly, who isn't?), EAC can directly benefit from every single one of your purchases. It's like giving two gifts in one!

Next time you're picking up a few items through Amazon, log onto the site through smile.amazon.com and enter "Early Alert Canines" as the charity you wish to support.

Your shopping experience will then continue as it normally does, including automatic access to your Prime account and Amazon purchase history, but Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price of the items you buy to EAC. Amazon recommends bookmarking smile.amazon.com to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile.com.

Wear EAC Colors proudly.....Join Team EAC! We have officially launched our own EAC Store through Queensboro. Our store can be found at: <http://eacstore.qbstores.com>

The entire vast selection of clothing, accessories, fleece, towels, hats and much more are now available with custom colored stitch logos. There are many colors, styles and items to choose from. When you log on, you will also see a special Instant Savings Award waiting for you. Please Bookmark this link as well: <http://eacstore.qbstores.com>

Happy Holidays to you from the Staff and Dogs of EAC!

Elle & Coach, a Book Review By Terry O'Rourke

(Continued from page 1)

The diabetes story

The first half of the book tells what the family learns about type 1 diabetes and how to support their child and sibling. They become active in the JDRF as Stefany ends up organizing an annual national event that targets Washington D.C. legislators to create awareness and funding for diabetes research and treatment options. During one D.C. event Stefany recalls an assembly of children with diabetes from all over the country gathered in a congressional chamber. One of the children had a diabetes alert dog with her. During this event the dog alerted her handler and resolved a threatening blood sugar event with little fanfare or disruption.

This prompted Stefany to look into the whole concept of diabetes alert dogs. Stefany, however, skeptically approached the topic, doubtful that dogs could actually be of practical use to diabetics. Elle grew up fearful of dogs, traumatized by an early childhood experience. Further research led them to an agency in Kansas that trained service dogs for a variety of disabilities, including blood glucose alert for diabetics. They applied and after a considerable lapse of time were surprised with an opportunity for team training and pairing with a dog. The family nearly turned down the opportunity when Craig's father died just before the team training. They tried to put it off but the training agency told them they couldn't or they would lose their place and have to go to the back of a long line. The family decided to go ahead with the training and Elle and her father traveled to Kansas for the training.

Coach exceeds expectations

The second half of the book focuses on how Coach wins their hearts. I won't spoil the many plot twists this book takes but the rest of the book recounts how Coach integrates into Elle's and her family's life in ways that no one could have imagined. Even the dog's name makes his appearance seem like divine intervention. It's a heartwarming story of emotional growth and victory over the many obstacles children and families with medical challenges face. The incredible talents and loyalty of Coach shine through in ways sure to elicit a few tears.

I highly recommend this book. I read it in one sitting and sent several copies as gifts to relatives and friends of mine that support EAC. This book gets to the essence of why we value our dogs so much. It made me smile when Coach's trainer pleaded with the family, just like Carol Edwards did with me many years ago, to **"trust the dog!"**

A Trainer's Perspective by Erica Horn

It was an interesting experience reading Stefany Shaheen's book *Elle and Coach*. Having been diagnosed with T1D around the same time Elle had been, while reading, I had brief flashbacks to the time my own family had received the news. During those moments I could clearly identify with Elle. Every other page I made a mental note to go home and hug my parents as I'm sure they experienced similar emotions to Stephany and her husband. It's definitely tough for all those involved.

One favorite aspect of my job is following up with the families once a dog from EAC has been placed in their home. As much as we'd like them to be, our dogs aren't machines. They're living breathing creatures who need down time from their job, and sometimes that brings on times where they might miss their diabetic's low blood sugar. It's something that every family deals with in their own way especially in the first days of the dog's placement. I usually find myself consoling the family and reassuring them that it's completely normal, and it doesn't mean their dog won't effectively work much of the time. I kept waiting for Stefany to write about how her family dealt with the missed alerts. It was an aspect of her story that I really wanted to read about; unfortunately, it never was addressed.

Throughout the rest of the story there were a couple "wince" moments for me where I had to still the dog trainer voice inside my head. Whenever it was mentioned that Coach was off leash/untethered, I winced. As Stefany described how Elle was allowed, as a very young adult, to be the sole handler in public of a service dog only after a couple days of training, I winced. My wince deepened as I read that from the start Coach had unlimited interaction with the rest of the family.

Our program is different. We require extensive training to make sure everyone knows how to handle any situation. To set the team up for success we restrict family member's interaction with the dog. We want to make sure the dog finds the diabetic as its target and the main person they should depend on. If the family's dog(s), kid(s), or adult(s) are MORE interesting to the dog than the diabetic, the dog will be too distracted to work.

For each DAD that EAC places, the sun needs to rise and set with the diabetic. This ensures a lifetime of not only companionship for the team, but also a healthy working relationship between the two.

Overall, I'm glad I read *Elle and Coach*. It gave me a new perspective on diabetes; this time from a Mother's view. Even though there were times where my inner trainer winced; there is one point that I can argue wholeheartedly. Stefany Shaheen expresses to her readers that a diabetic alert dog can be hugely beneficial for a diabetic's blood glucose management, as well as their morale.



Client Interview by Rochelle Kiddoo

Earlier this month I got the chance to interview our beloved client Lia and her Diabetic Alert Dog O'Shea. Lia was matched with O'Shea in September 2013 and the two attended graduation ceremonies in January, 2014. It's been a love fest ever since. Here is what Lia had to say.

Q: How has your life changed since you were paired with O'Shea?

A: My A1C is at its best without having a lot of lows. My family is less stressed and less worried about my blood sugar dropping when no one is around. I'm a lot less worried and my stress level is reduced. I feel much love and happiness and I'm able to have more fun.

Q: What was O'Shea's most dramatic alert?

A: She has had many, usually when we are at work. I work in customer service and often get very focused on my customers and don't notice when my blood sugar is dropping. O'Shea notices quickly and she is very persistent. It took me awhile to understand that she wasn't begging for attention; she was alerting.

Q: What challenges have you faced with your DAD?

A: I haven't found too many but a significant challenge is learning to travel with O'Shea, especially when traveling to locations with strict Quarantine laws. I am planning a trip to Hawaii next summer and I've already started the process. Many of you know that the state of Hawaii has not had to deal with rabies and they want to keep it that way.

Consequently they have very strict guidelines for pets entering the state and many pets are quarantined for months at a time. To avoid the quarantine the state requires an up-to-date rabies certificate and blood work for rabies antibodies. The rabies certificate and the blood work are sent to the University of Kansas Veterinary School. The school then runs the blood work for the rabies antibodies and sends the certification back to the applicant and his or her vet. The applicant then needs to fax the certification, along with proof of microchip, to the proper authorities in Hawaii. The process can take time so all paperwork needs to be in order several weeks in advance.



Lia and O'Shea

Q: What advice would you share with someone who is considering applying for a DAD?

A: Be patient when going through the application process. It is so worth the wait. Once you have the dog, don't ignore her. You may think you're okay but your dog will know well in advance (up to 30 minutes) of your meter that your blood sugar is dropping so pay attention to your dog's cues.

If you have a full access dog, know that you have to plan in advance. It's much like having a child except dogs aren't as widely accepted and business and proprietors often question the validity of the dog and my needs. The public is learning but they are learning slowly so be prepared to assert your rights and educate others on ADA laws.

Q: How does your employer support you and O'Shea?

A: Initially this was a bit of a challenge but, with EAC's assistance we overcame the challenge and my employer now supports us completely. In fact, my Sr. Manager is a dog lover and she loves to buy little gifts for O'Shea. She also makes sure I have adequate time off for O'Shea's veterinary appointments and my own doctor appointments. I know she will always go to bat for me. The customers love O'Shea too.

Q: Aside from the alert work, what is the best thing about having O'Shea?

A: The attention I get in public. I've always been a "fly under the radar" kind of person. I hid myself and my disease. Now, with O'Shea by my side, people recognize and remember me and I'm able to talk about my diabetes.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

A: It's been such a positive experience having O'Shea in my life. It's the best feeling in the world. I can't even put into words how wonderful it is.

EarlyAlertCanines

1641 Challenge Dr. #300
Concord, CA 94520

Phone: 925-349-5190

Fax: 510-201-9041

E-mail: info@EarlyAlertCanines.com

Executive Director

Carol Edwards

Board Members

Mike Guglielmino, President
Kim Bercovitz, DVM, Secretary
Ellen Moser, Treasurer
Mark Locher
Rick Freeman

Newsletter Staff

Rochelle Kiddoo, Writer
Marianne Ryan, Publisher

Office Staff

Carol Edwards, Executive Director/
Founder
Erica Horn, Trainer/Instructor
Marianne Ryan, HR Consultant
Beth Snow, Program Coordinator
John Alecca, Organization
Development Consultant
Rochelle Kiddoo, Volunteer

Support Staff

Breanne Harris, Published Research
Assistant in Pediatric Endocrinology

Website by Creative Ape

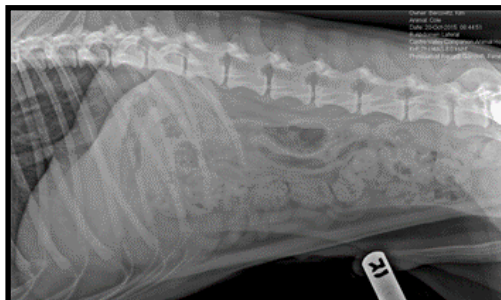
Vet Notes by Dr. Kim Bercovitz

Continued from page 2

I've seen one patient that made several small piles of foamy saliva. Other dogs will have drooling. Most will seem anxious early on in the process, often pacing or seeming restless. As they progress, they get

lethargic, depressed and go into shock. Some owners notice their stomach seems bigger or bloated. For an owner the important part is to get them to an emergency vet ASAP. Don't feed your dog anything and don't try to relieve the gas yourself.

There are only a few true surgical emergencies. This is one of them. The quicker the dog is given IV fluids and his stomach surgically un-rotated the better prognosis he has. My dog was in surgery in about an hour. He lost his spleen because it went too long without blood; that's how quick it happens, but he survived. I'm hoping that by writing this article more people will know the signs of bloat and be able to save their own dogs.



Abdominal X-ray post surgery

Tail wags 'till next time, Dr. Kim Bercovitz

Meet Our New Recruits

[Click here to read the scoop!](#)



Waimea



Ricki



Tiger