



## Bellwether Magazine

---

Volume 1  
Number 73 *Fall 2010*

Article 7

---

10-1-2010

# NBC Case Study Update: Something Good From Suki's Story

Kelly Stratton  
*University of Pennsylvania*

# NBC Case Study Update

## *Something good from Suki's story*

BY KELLY STRATTON

**F**rances Wade-Whitaker spent the night of July 9 with her husband and a bottle of champagne. They were celebrating survival.

“I had some real anxiety coming up on the year anniversary,” said Fran. “But I feel emotionally better now. I made it through Suki’s first year and we celebrated how far she’s come.”

On that July date last summer, Fran’s horse Suki was caught in a barn fire. After treatment at New Bolton Center and several months at a layup facility, the horse was moved in May to a regular boarding facility.

While the burns the horse suffered have mostly healed, there is one section on her back that has been especially difficult.

“It’s finally starting to heal,” said Fran. “I clean it and exfoliate it constantly and it’s getting smaller and smaller.”

Fran also applies sunscreen to Suki’s sensitive face and back to protect the skin from sun damage. Being able to touch the horse’s face is another milestone met – for months after the barn fire, Suki wasn’t able to wear a halter and could be difficult when vets and techs would apply antibiotic ointment to her injuries.

### **Making a Connection**

Suki’s story in the spring issue of *Bellwether* struck a chord with many readers, but especially touched was Penn Vet alum Lori Ferdock.

“I wanted to let Fran know there was a burn community out there,” said Lori, whose 11-year-old son Vincent is a burn survivor. “I wanted to let her know that something good could come out of something so terrible and I asked if I could share Suki’s story at the Burn Center.”

Lori, a small animal veterinarian at a practice in Gilbertsville, is also a passionate volunteer at Lehigh Valley Hospital’s Burn Center. After her son’s accident four years ago and realizing

support for children burn survivors was lacking, Lori chose to devote much of her free time to working with survivors and getting them to open up and talk about their scars in a supportive environment.

Fran gladly agreed to meet Lori and granted permission to share Suki’s story with the survivors at the Center.

“Fran was very excited about the thought of me sharing Suki’s story and we decided to work on a children’s book about it,” said Lori. “My initial thought was to write the story specifically for burn centers, but I think it would be a good children’s book for a wider audience, as well.”

Lori’s son Vincent, or “Vinny” as his family calls him, was severely burned more than four years ago and has been undergoing various phases of treatment ever since. Lori knew that children and animals have a special connection and wanted to introduce Suki to her son.

“He was intimidated by her at first,” said Lori, “but after a little while they found a peace with each other.”



Vinny and Suki, both burn survivors, share a gentle moment.