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This Katonah veterinarian makes house calls

By **STEPHANIE SUSNJARA**

As soon as Dr. Sarah J. Cutler stepped out of her blue minivan, Cammie, a 4-month-old Springer spaniel, and her older sibling Daisy, a mini poodle, darted down the front steps and pounced on her. Dr. Cutler knelt down and petted both dogs, their tails wagging furiously. The dogs' owner, Barbara Gerlach, who also has two cats, observed the scene. "They just love Auntie Sarah," she said.

Ms. Gerlach led Dr. Cutler, along with her assistant Serena Fiorella, a licensed vet technician, into her Lake Katonah home. Everyone settled into Ms. Gerlach's kitchen, where three weeks prior, Dr. Cutler had treated Daisy for a severe gastroenteritis attack.

"I was really worried," said Ms. Gerlach. But Dr. Cutler came right over and worked her magic.

"We were able to treat Daisy very quickly," added Dr. Cutler. She explained how she had used a portable blood analyzer, which allowed her to determine an immediate course of treatment involving subcutaneous fluids.

Daisy had made a full recovery. Now Dr. Cutler was back to do a checkup on Cammie, who had suffered an ear infection a couple of months back. Ms. Fiorella gently held Cammie still while Dr. Cutler examined her and cleaned out her ears. "Now, where's Addie?" asked Dr. Cutler.

Prior to launching her housecall veterinary practice — At Home Vet Care — Dr. Cutler worked at Somers Animal Hospital for six years, where she is still affiliated as a per diem doctor and can perform radiographs and surgeries when needed. Prior to moving to Katonah, Dr. Cutler held a post at Park East Animal Hospital in Manhattan for six years. She is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine and did her internship in small animal medicine and surgery at the Animal Medical Center in Manhattan.

Addie, Ms. Gerlach's 3-year-old domestic shorthair cat, was found upstairs, lounging peacefully on Ms. Gerlach's daughter's bed. "I'm worried Addie is getting too skinny," said Ms. Gerlach.

Dr. Cutler placed Addie on a portable scale. "Her weight is fine," she said. Ms. Fiorella then held Addie while Dr. Cutler administered a feline leukemia booster via a transdermal injection.

"Dr. Cutler has really made an effort to get to know the pet,s and you can see they're just really relaxed with her," said Ms. Gerlach.

"This service allows me to treat each pet and each family as individuals and tailor each case," said Dr. Cutler, who is married with three children. She is also the proud owner of a schnauzer and three cats. "I'm a people person, and this way my clients can have more access, like e-mailing me directly with their questions or concerns."

"I really didn't think about how this service might benefit me," said Ms.

Gerlach, who had a relationship with Dr. Cutler through Somers Animal Hospital. "But then my back went out this summer, and there was no way I could have lugged the animals somewhere."

Other households that could benefit from a housecall vet service include those with pets who have mobility issues such as "bigger, older dogs with bad arthritis or chronic disease." Added Dr. Cutler, "Some pet owners in our area — like an elderly client of mine who doesn't drive — find office visits a challenge."



STEPHANIE SUSNJARA PHOTO

Sarah J. Cutler and vet tech Serena Fiorella with 4-month-old puppy Cammie.

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Dr. Cutler's housecall services for cats and dogs include examinations, diagnostics, vaccines and euthanasia. She is equipped with all the essential technology such as a vet scanner and blood centrifuge, and carries a laptop, where she maintains computerized patient records. She also travels with a well-stocked pharmacy.

"Many people might think this is a fancy service," said Ms. Gerlach, who was surprised to learn that Dr. Cutler's fees are similar to what other vets charge in northern Westchester."

Dr. Cutler and Ms. Fiorella packed up their supplies and said goodbye to Ms. Gerlach before heading over to their next appointment on Billingsley Road in Goldens Bridge. Sarah Manes, along with her preschool-age daughter, greeted them at the door.

Dr. Cutler had come to conduct a follow-up exam on Marcus, an older long-haired Maine coon cat. She had seen him six weeks earlier and found he had elevated liver enzymes. But after a course of treatment, Marcus still was not himself. With Ms. Fiorella's help, Dr. Cutler took Marcus's temperature with a digital thermometer, weighed him, and then decided he needed another round of blood work to determine what was wrong.

"When I found out Dr. Cutler did housecalls, it was just great, since Marcus gets really sick in the car," said Ms. Manes.

"Many cats suffer from stress-induced vomiting and diarrhea when they have to move out of their environment," said Dr. Cutler. Some even suffer from seizures."

She looked sympathetically at Marcus and stroked his long fur.

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