

Ruh's Muse of the Month
As told to Chris Mandeville

Ruh (pronounced "Roo") is a service dog and PPW/C mascot. He likes stories of all kinds, especially those involving squirrels. His favorite things are writers, kids, squirrels, his cat Loki, and brie (at room temperature, of course).

MARCH 2008 – Kirsten Akens

I adore my muse for March, Kirsten Akens. We're kindred spirits, she and I. We both love cats. And cheese. And cuddling up with a good book (though she actually reads them). But come to think of it, she doesn't chase squirrels, bark or shed...at least that I know of. Well, I adore her anyway. In fact, when I see her I completely forget I'm a service dog and I run to greet her, wagging like mad.

When Kirsten smiles and scratches me behind the ears, I feel about as lucky as a pig in mud, an eater of a steak left unattended on a table, or members of the PPW Board of Directors when Kirsten is at the helm of the Pikes Peak Writers Conference. Yes, Kirsten is the Conference Director for 2008, and as a result we're all in for a scrumptious treat. Well, maybe not scrumptious. How about enriching, edifying, educational and enlightening? (Thesaurus.com again. I do love those "e" words.) Any-who, we're going to have a pawsitively wonderful time at PPWC 2008 due to the inspired guidance of Director Kirsten Akens and her fabulously gifted crew of volunteers. That's because Kirsten is a great leader, a forward thinker, logical and creative, and dang smart. You all better look out or I might knock you down as I bound merrily toward Kirsten and the Marriott for my yearly dose of writers, agents, editors, pitches, speeches and workshops.

Have I mentioned that Kirsten uses her powers for good, not evil? Yes indeed, she does. She focuses her acumen (good word, even though it doesn't begin with an "e") onto the page with whole bunches of brilliant words and ideas devoted to causes both global and local. The newspaper page, that is. She's a writer for The Colorado Springs Independent Newspaper ("the Indy") with a number of cool stories to her credit. I'm particularly fond of her cover story on Colorado Springs' School in the Woods, a fourth-grade only public school that teaches kids to be environmentally conscious "naturalists." After all, there's only so much a dog can do on his own without fingers and a voice, so I really appreciate the help from Kirsten and fellow nature lovers (of any age) protecting planet earth's big backyard.

So I hope you'll attend PPWC 2008 and experience for yourself the myriad (Dictionary.com) of reasons why PPW is so proud and fortunate to have Kirsten as the PPWC Director this year. When you see the fantastic lineup of speakers, the pitch room full of acquiring editors and agents, the delectable food-stuffs, and the slew (boy that internet comes in handy) of educational, entertaining and inspiring workshops, you'll think you're a lucky dog, too. Lucky, lucky, lucky.

Thanks, Kirsten, for the *flock* of inspiration. I think I'm in love with you (and with thesaurus.com).