SCOPES
FROM STETHOSCOPES | TO MICROSCOPES | TO THE SCOPE OF THE COLLEGE
News from Cornell University’s College of Veterinary Medicine
July 2012

students
strong, stunning, and steadfast

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CORNELL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

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ON THE COVER: A love of horses and reproductive physiology first brought Dr. Jennifer Sorensen to Cornell as a visiting veterinary student through the Havenhuis Foundation Fellowship Program. Today, she is an exceptional researcher working in Dr. Robin Davidson’s lab, with a penchant for applying her knowledge to real-world scenarios.
Foundations and Facelifts

Since the College’s founding, Cornell has recognized the need for first-class facilities that support our programs in teaching, research, and patient care. Accommodation of expanding clinical and research demands led to the College’s relocation from central to east campus in the 1950s and the subsequent creation of what was then the new hospital and teaching complex in the 1990s. However, historic Schurman Hall and James Law auditorium, where students still learn anatomy, have tutorials, do student surgeries, attend larger lectures, and put on musicals, dance performances, skits, and auctions, have not changed much since their completion in 1957 and are badly in need of rejuvenation. This summer, the College will initiate the first capital project within our teaching complex in more than two, and the first comprehensive renovation of Schurman Hall in more than five, decades. The project has been prioritized within the SUNY capital plan and comprises an exciting rethinking of our original academic building. As an anchor at the east end of Tower Road and the main doorway to our university collaborators, this is a major project for the College of Veterinary Medicine and the University and one that promises to begin an extended revitalization of our teaching spaces that will enhance student facilities; decompress overcrowded lecture halls; enhance interactions between students, faculty, and staff; and enable exciting demonstrations and public meetings that are secure from our hospital activities.

A history of change

Cornell’s College of Veterinary Medicine was originally housed in the middle of campus, in what is now Ives Hall. At the time, the building was one of the most innovative and spacious veterinary facilities in the country, serving a total of approximately 300 students and faculty and supporting the entire teaching, research, and service needs of a program mainly dedicated to large animal medicine. Since then, the College has grown and diversified to meet society’s changing needs. Dean George C. Poppendieck spearheaded the construction of the Veterinary Research Tower, which opened in 1974, and Dean Edward Melby fought courageously for a new teaching hospital that was critical to preserving the College’s standing and meeting the challenges and opportunities of expanding clinical programs. And after many years of planning, the New York State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory opened in 2010, uniting multiple diagnostic services that had been in separate facilities. Currently many of the College’s major teaching facilities, including tutorial rooms and spaces dedicated to teaching anatomy and student surgery, still reside in the original 1957 structure, which desperately needs renovation and is served by mechanical systems that are beyond their lifespan. Locker rooms and bathrooms that were appropriate for the gender distribution of classes in 1957 are currently augmented by temporary facilities. And the move of necropsy, histopathology, and parasitology from Schurman Hall and the “Old DL” to the new Animal Health Diagnostic Center building left more than 30,000 square feet of unoccupied space in the core of our complex, space that remains unused and unusable.
Plans for the future

This Spring we will embark on a design process that will reshape the College’s foundation and shape its future. The vision outlined in our 2009 Campus Master Plan suggests a two-phased process that will first create two new classrooms, an atrium, presentation space, gender-appropriate student lockers, bathrooms, and other facilities, followed by a comprehensive restructuring of Schurman Hall, including student surgery, tutorial spaces, and the currently unoccupied necropsy and old DL areas. The renovations will improve security and separation between teaching and patient areas and accommodate a modest increase in the number of students enrolled in the first three years. It will also enable redesign of some of our currently overcrowded lecture halls to more interactive teaching spaces for elective courses and create an appropriate demonstration venue for the many educational and scientific meetings held at the College (including the NYSVMS/Cornell Annual Conference, the College Open House, and many other outreach events).

What has been termed the “Class Expansion Project,” because it will size the pre-clinical classes to the capacity of our hospital, is a wonderful opportunity to preserve and integrate the old and the new. I encourage alumni and friends to visit Sage Hall, Duffield Hall, Milstein Hall, and the Physical Sciences building as examples of the creative adaptive re-use that we envision. As we embark on this critical planning process I will keep you informed of the plans that emerge.

I am extraordinarily grateful to Cornell’s President, David Skorton, Provost Kent Fuchs, and other members of the University’s leadership team for their support, which was critical in our recent successful efforts to have the first phase of this plan prioritized at the University level. The entire project will take between five and six years, but after slightly more than half a century, the grand but aging Schurman Hall will be transformed, and we will again have a teaching facility that enables our faculty and students to meet the challenges of the future.

Cordially,

Michael Kotlikoff, VMD, PhD
Austin O. Hone
Dean of Veterinary Medicine
Once a mentee, always a mentor

When Christopher Blackwood (pictured, right) was growing up, his instincts told him that the grass just might be greener somewhere else. He and his mom lived in Harlem. She worked a lot. Trouble surrounded the young boy. Fortunately, so too did people with the power to help him create opportunities for his future. These people, Blackwood shared, laid the foundation for him to succeed. They also inspired him to help others do the same. Blackwood is equal parts scientist and mentor and credits this reality to those who helped him get where he is today.

A mentor throughout his high school and undergraduate careers, Blackwood wanted to continue to help others learn and grow while pursuing his doctorate at Cornell. He was instrumental in establishing the relationship between Cornell and the Saturday Science and Math Academy, a grassroots neighborhood initiative that runs science and math programs for minority students on Saturday mornings in Ithaca. He is also a frequent speaker for Project Lansing at the Residential Correctional facility in Lansing, N.Y., where he helps to prepare young women at the Lansing Residential Center for their future, through academic and intellectual growth. Finally, Blackwood is a frequent volunteer at Ithaca High School and Greater Ithaca Activities Center.

“People have helped me along the way,” said Blackwood, citing, for instance, those who organized college tours and made sure he was on the bus and his academic advisor, Dr. David Lin. “I would like to acknowledge Dr. David Lin as being a great mentor. He has provided a lab environment for me to grow as a scientist and to stay grounded, occasionally assisting me in establishing the relationships between Cornell and grassroots initiatives. I feel blessed to pursue a PhD at Cornell, to have the credentials to achieve these goals, to help others realize their goals and full potential, to speak up about the factors that are detrimental to success, and to use my research to potentially remedy destructive diseases. When I help students, as Dr. Lin has helped me, it keeps me grounded. It reminds me how important it is to have role models who look like you and have experienced similar life events.”

These experiences have also influenced Blackwood’s professional goals. Determined to pursue a career in academia, Blackwood expects that his diverse background will be an asset to future students who “need to see themselves.”

“As welcoming and nurturing as Cornell has been [in fact that is why he chose Cornell for doctorate study], it was difficult to make the transition to my PhD work because I couldn’t reach out to professors who looked like me,” said Blackwood. “I didn’t see myself, so I couldn’t envision myself as a research scientist. I want to fill this role for future students. I want to help diversify the tenure track professors at universities.”

Rather than waiting for professorial status, though, Blackwood’s commitment to serving underrepresented communities has already led him to Cornell’s Office of Minority Educational Affairs, with whom he has partnered to hire undergraduate minority students in his neurobiology lab.

One of the undergraduates Blackwood mentors is Alessandro Baletti (pictured, left), a Peruvian-born immigrant, transfer student, and first-generation college student. With hard work, scholarship support, and experience in Blackwood’s lab, Baletti recently earned a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship and will be pursuing a PhD in biomedical science at New York University in the fall.

“Chris has been a big part of my support system at Cornell,” said Baletti. “He has been an example to follow. He has taught me to persevere and not to quit. He has been an important factor in many of my accomplishments. More importantly, he has helped me to understand the science behind our research.”

Blackwood is in his fifth year of his PhD work, looking at the implications of neurodegenerative disorders like Alzheimer’s disease. He and his team have discovered a protein that is important for regulating the process to make new neurons, which are important to learning and memory, motor function, and preventing dementia. Understanding how the brain produces neurons, Blackwood said, may be the key to developing therapeutic targets for treating people with diseases like Alzheimer’s.
It was the first day of high school, and she was petrified. But as Kate Allen DVM '12 listened to her new biology teacher outline the tough curriculum ahead all she could think about was the huge fish swimming in a tank next to him. After class, curiosity finally overcame insecurity.

"I approached him and said, 'Can I ask what that fish is in the tank?'" Allen recalled. "But he said, 'No, I won't tell you. Let me know when you find out.'"

A week later she returned to tell him not only the fish's name but all the rich details about its life-history she had learned in her quest to identify it.

"This man made me want to be a scientist," said Allen. "His goal was to find each person's spark of interest that would get them engaged with science. As I've progressed in science I've found that teaching is one of the best ways I can reconnect with that initial spark."

Inspiration like that can be contagious, and Allen has spent the last two summers of veterinary school spreading hers to a new generation at the University's summer program for high-school students interested in veterinary medicine. Each year since it began in Summer 2010 the program has given about 80 high-school upperclassmen an immersive three-week introduction to veterinary sciences and life at Cornell. Drs. John Hermanson and Paul Maza lead the course with the help of teaching assistants (TAs) hand-selected from the veterinary student body.

"We know our veterinary students well and can spot those who would make good teachers," said Dr. Hermanson. "These are people who want to teach, have a background or interest in it, and are independent students who take initiative and can actively share their passion as educators and role models."

Several student TAs have brought special experience and skills to the table. Before veterinary school Melissa Andritz '13 spent two years teaching middle school science in Houston, Texas, through the Teach For America program. Shannon Verciario '12 used her artistic skills to develop illustrated educational tools.

"Kate's story about her high-school biology teacher made me suspect she could share that kind of inspiration," said Dr. Hermanson. "She dove into her teaching role, taking a huge amount of responsibility for the course before it even started."

Allen taught fourth-graders for a year after college, an experience that helped her aid the faculty teachers in planning the new course. She and her fellow student-teachers prepared hands-on labs, wrote handouts, helped organize schedules and logistics, and connected with students during and after labs, answering questions, holding office hours, and leading study sessions and tutor groups. While teaching they paid close attention to student feedback, taking frequent surveys to determine what worked best.

"Communicating complex science to teenagers with lots of interest but little background was incredibly invigorating," said Allen.

"We developed different ways of explaining: analogies, drawings, mathematical equations, dissection labs. For each technique you would see different students go "Ooh!" at different moments."

Learning about learning helped the teaching team use observations and student feedback in the course’s subsequent years. Allen’s spark for teaching helped make the College’s first high-school summer program a model of success. Now in 2012 the College will offer four veterinary-themed programs: Small Animal Practice, Sustainable Animal Husbandry, Captive Raptor Management, and Conservation Medicine.

"Teaching reminds me what got me into biology in the first place," said Allen. "Seeing a high school student light up when they finally understand how the lungs work, or seeing their fascination when examining the innards of a cadaver—those moments remind me of why I wanted to get into science. If we can send each student home with an imprint of something that made them feel accomplished and invigorated, our goal as teachers has been met."

Allen sees her teaching experience playing a crucial role in her future as a small-animal practitioner.

"I'm here studying animal health and how to improve it," said Allen. "However I feel that in the long run client education and communication will benefit clients and patients far more than many of the direct things we do as scientists and doctors. I want to continue as a lifelong educator and continue lifelong learning with my clients."
Kate Allen ’12 (pink shirt, right) helps students explore anatomy as a TA in the College’s high-school summer program along with course co-leader Dr. John Hermanson (green shirt, glasses).
Many researchers hope their work will someday help human lives. For Dr. Jennifer Sones, that day came earlier than most, and the lives it touched were close to home.

A love of horses and reproductive physiology first brought her to Cornell as a visiting veterinary student through the Havenmeyer Foundation Fellowship Program, which provides an opportunity for veterinary students interested in research careers to get a taste of equine research at the College. Inspired by her summer with Dr. Douglas Antczak and his laboratory at Baker Institute for Animal Health performing equine breeding management and reproductive genomics, she returned there for a year-long post-DVM research fellowship and applied to pursue a PhD at Cornell.

“Within weeks of being admitted to Cornell’s graduate school, I discovered I was pregnant,” said Dr. Sones. “Because of my knowledge of reproductive physiology through my time in research, I knew immediately that mine was a high-risk pregnancy—my chronic kidney disease made me especially vulnerable to developing preeclampsia.”

One of the most common causes of death in mothers and babies, preeclampsia affects up to 10 percent of pregnancies. Without warning it strikes suddenly, spiking blood-pressure and kicking kidney function into a downward spiral. By the time symptoms show, as early as the 20th week of gestation, the only treatment is to deliver the fetus.

“I took my pregnancy into my own hands,” said Dr. Sones. “I went to specialists, lowered my salt intake, monitored my blood pressure daily, and had my kidney function assessed regularly. Through my research I knew that I was at risk; this knowledge helped my daughter and me get through our pregnancy. The impact of research is rarely so tangible.”

Few women get Dr. Sones’ chance to plan ahead. By the time preeclampsia’s spontaneous symptoms manifest, the mother and baby are already in danger.

Dr. Robin Davison’s lab is working to change this. She and her team have discovered the world’s first known genetic line of mice that spontaneously develop preeclampsia’s principle features, opening new doors to discovery. In her second year in graduate school Dr. Sones joined Davison’s lab and is applying her reproductive knowledge
“Women aware of their predisposition to preeclampsia can use preventative strategies to give themselves the best chance for successful pregnancies,” said Dr. Sones. “Veterinarians don’t always have the opportunity to impact human health, but I am now using my veterinary background in the context of an animal model that can be directly translated to improving human medicine.”

Dr. Davison’s dual appointment at the College of Veterinary Medicine and Weill Cornell Medical College readily enables such translation, letting her lab collaborate with human doctors working at the bedside of patients with risks for developing preeclampsia.

“Doctors at Weill videoconference with us every two weeks,” said Dr. Sones. “We can investigate mechanisms in mice that they can’t evaluate during human pregnancy, so they provide us with human samples that we can use to validate our findings in mice.”

Through this collaboration Dr. Davison’s lab recently identified a potential biomarker for preeclampsia that can be detected in circulation. New non-invasive tests may soon be able to find this red-flag, identifying patients who are developing the disease before serious symptoms strike.

“I was very fortunate that by returning to research, it educated me about my vulnerability to developing preeclampsia,” said Dr. Sones. “I hope my research will help empower at-risk women to do all they can to make their pregnancies successful as well. The ability to benefit both animal welfare and human health through biomedical research makes me proud to be a veterinarian.”
Editor’s Note: Sara Huckabone is a third-year student at the College. She was recently recognized by one of the clients of the Cornell University Hospital for Animals for the compassionate and highly skilled care that she provided. We asked Sara to share a bit about her experiences in the clinics and the thoughts and emotions that they bring to mind. Enjoy!
began clinics in January. Academically I have really enjoyed working up difficult cases and observing procedures such as biopsies, ultrasounds, and surgery. Some of my favorite cases were those referred to Cornell. I found these cases fascinating. Obviously it is most rewarding if we have an answer at the end of the day, but just seeing the process a veterinarian goes through in search of that diagnosis has been really valuable for me. On a more personal note, however, I enjoyed connecting with people by taking care of their animals.

My short time on clinics affirmed that veterinarians spend tons of time working with people and need excellent client communication skills. At first I was unnerved by all of the questions that the clients asked me. Do I remember the facts correctly? Shouldn’t I consult someone who has already graduated? Gradually I grew more confident in my answers and this transition has been really important for me. I also learned a lot from observing how the clinicians interact with clients. I am most impressed with the veterinarians who are confident, patient, and have the ability to describe complex disease processes in a way that is understandable. They listen to the clients, have a sense of humor, and build trusting relationships.

I believe that it is absolutely appropriate for a veterinarian to express emotion. It is impossible not to sympathize with clients whose animals are sick. I had one owner come in with a dog who she believed was healthy and in less than a day we discovered that the dog had an aggressive form of cancer and needed surgery. I completely empathized with the woman’s sadness and fear. Owners look to veterinarians to help them gather the facts they need to make difficult and powerful decisions. The balance that good veterinarians obtain, in my opinion, is the ability to show clients empathy while, at the same time, giving them the information that they need to make informed decisions that they feel good about.

Clients are seeking the best medical treatment for their pets, whom they consider to be part of their family, so it feels like a big responsibility to care for their animals. I empathize with how hard it must be to leave their animal with a student they just met, and I appreciate the trust most clients put in us. The animals in the hospital are often scared and stressed, which does not promote healing. I think that part of our job as students is to make the animals feel comfortable and safe and many of my classmates go above and beyond to make this happen. My first patient was a pomeranian who could not walk and was missing an eye. I spent two weeks caring for him, and I would often pet him and give him treats in the middle of the day. I liked to see his ears perk up and hear him bark, which his owners told me signified happiness. It is rewarding to positively impact the animal’s stay in the hospital.

When clients express to me that I did a good job working with their animal it definitely makes me feel happy and more confident. Some clients have sent me pictures, and I enjoy seeing their healthy animals and feeling as though I have had some part in the healing process.

My father used to tell me that the most important aspect of a job in life is whether or not you enjoy it. I am really enjoying clinics, which affirms that I have taken the right path. I am drawn to wildlife medicine in particular because these animals are often injured by humans, directly or indirectly. They don’t have thoughtful, loving owners, and it is rewarding to help offset the negative impact that we, as humans, are having on the other inhabitants of our planet by caring for these animals.

By Sara Huckabone, DVM ’13
From famine to fortune: Conservation's new groove

Building budding economies through veterinary medicine
When hungry lions standing over a fresh kill blocked the road on her way to work, Sarah Dumas DVM ’12 knew to wait until they had eaten their fill.

“Several females who had just fed were lying contentedly nearby, but one adult and several cubs were just beginning to eat,” said Dumas. “Sated lions usually leave you alone, but never cross a hungry lion.”

Standing in the back of an uncovered truck in Zambia’s Luangwa National Park, Dumas faced a vivid reminder of how hunger can make the difference between dangerous conflict and peaceful coexistence.

It’s a difference Dumas understood well. Her life goal to improve international development through veterinary medicine had brought her to Zambia’s Luangwa Valley to work for Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO), a nonprofit working to reduce the human hunger and poverty that drive people to poaching. By empowering thousands of farmers who shared the valley with wildlife to replace poaching and habitat-burning charcoal harvesting with new ways of generating food and income, COMACO is pioneering a new conservation model that benefits both wild ecosystems and human communities.

Supported by Cornell’s Expanding Horizons program (which is funded by the Lincoln Ellsworth Foundation, Dr. Tom Schat, alumni, and a number of corporate sponsors), Dumas spent the summer of 2009 with COMACO helping to revolutionize Zambia’s rural poultry production system in ways that are already transforming family nutrition, local economies, and public health.

“Chickens provide reliable sources of protein that families can eat, sell, or barter,” said Dumas. “But traditional poultry production in Zambian villages involves free-range chickens, a system that produces little and puts the health of birds at risk.”

When Expanding Horizons first funded Erin McDonald ’09 to kickstart COMACO’s poultry project in 2006, no families had separate chicken housing. Birds wandered freely through human houses. Predators, theft, and disease ran rampant. The highly infectious avian virus that causes Newcastle disease (ND) spread easily, killing nearly every chicken it touched. Though Avian Influenza hasn’t yet reached Zambia, its inevitable arrival loomed like a public health nightmare waiting to storm.

“Our goal was to help farmers invest in simple improvements to flock husbandry that could have huge effects on flock health and productivity,” said Dumas. “I traveled through several villages to train 21 community vaccinators how to prevent ND and spoke to hundreds of COMACO poultry farmers about ND, Avian Influenza, bird nutrition, and husbandry. But our biggest impact comes from running ‘training the trainers’ workshops for COMACO’s extension staff. By building their capacity to teach local communities we have reached literally thousands of households.”

Since COMACO’s poultry project began, average household flock sizes in the area have tripled, increasing the community’s protein intake and opening new markets. This inspired Dumas to write a proposal to establish small egg layer facilities to improve egg handling, production, and quality. COMACO began eight such facilities in 2010. Today Zambians working in these facilities are learning new skills, improving their earning potential, and providing neighbors with protein through a growing market for farm-fresh eggs.

“When I returned to Zambia in 2011 the progress and impact were staggering,” said Dumas. “Household income of facility operators had grown enormously. Nearby community members reported consuming nearly twice as many eggs as those without layer facilities in their communities. Now 97 percent of farmers are using separated chicken housing, and many learned how from their neighbors. It’s tech-transfer gone viral.”

Dumas plans to continue developing the project into a proven model that can be replicated in other communities by deepening and demonstrating its impacts. In considering PhD programs that would let her pursue such a project, she is once more contemplating Cornell.

“Expanding Horizons was one of the main reasons I first chose Cornell,” said Dumas. “Few universities offer this level of opportunity to study abroad. I knew I wanted to work in international development, but it’s difficult to establish connections and find funding to make a start. Because Expanding Horizons gave me both I am already using veterinary knowledge to improve people’s lives. Low-income farmers in developing countries only need the opportunity, expertise, and means to help themselves, three things that veterinary medicine is readily able to provide.”
rom lectures to clinics, a lot of learning at Cornell’s College of Veterinary Medicine comes from the classroom, but an equally important part comes from the people.

Priyangani DeSoysa ’12 is a people person. Passionate about politics and social issues, she was on the road to becoming a lawyer when her veterinary calling started to ring.

“I was falling in love with animal handling while working at zoos when I learned I’d been accepted to Cornell Law School, but ended up becoming a zookeeper instead,” said DeSoysa. “I’d never considered veterinary school, but after seven years working with animals I realized it was what I most wanted to do.”

So she applied to Cornell again, this time to the College of Veterinary Medicine, where she has become an exemplary leader in the student community.

Sharing her experience with student volunteers at the Janet L. Swanson Wildlife Health Center as a student coordinator, DeSoysa prepared labs where faculty teach skills relevant to zoo and wildlife medicine.

In 2010 DeSoysa took on one of the College’s most challenging student leadership roles: organizing Open House, which draws around 6,000 people to the College each year. A veritable festival of veterinary medicine, Open House shares the profession with aspiring veterinarians while improving awareness of how it impacts the greater community.

Managing more than 200 volunteers, arranging exhibits, acquiring animals, writing greater than 100 letters asking for financial support—it’s an organizational feat that would challenge even seasoned event planners, yet DeSoysa and co-chair Kristi Hulme ’12 rose to the occasion.

“Being a veterinary student is such a great experience,” said DeSoysa. “I love sharing it with the wider community and seeing it bring the College’s community together.”

The College’s diverse community inspired DeSoysa to serve as President of Cornell’s VOICE (Veterinary Students as One in Culture and Ethnicity), the founding chapter of a nationwide student organization that promotes multiculturalism and other forms of diversity in the veterinary profession.

Under her leadership the group ran cultural events and held popular lessons like conversational Spanish where students could get to know each other. Committed to community service, they raised funds for Haiti through an international food fair and for the Patient Assistance Fund through the Kiss the Cow competition in exchange for granting selected faculty the honor. The group also conducted educational outreach at the Lansing Residential Center for Girls, a locked full-security facility for troubled teens, sharing the company of animals with girls who either missed it or never had it.

“I love teaching and interacting with people,” said DeSoysa. “Sharing what we do is a big part of life as a veterinarian, and I look forward to being a practitioner working with clients and communities.”
As a new graduate of the Bronx High School of Science, Doug Aspros ’73, DVM ’75 had a lot of work to do. For years, his high school teachers had instilled in him the responsibility to use science to serve society. Truth be told, his mentors probably pictured him doing this in a laboratory, but Dr. Aspros had other ideas.

“Science may be the only legitimate tool we have to understand how the world works, not human nature, but the matter around us,” said Dr. Aspros. “I have a great love and respect for the hard sciences, physics, computing, mathematics, but there is something about the animality of biology that calls to me. Veterinary medicine encompasses all of the sciences, so it was a natural choice for me.”

Determined to pursue a profession that revolved around living creatures, despite having no more animal experience than owning a hamster and a couple of budgies as a child, a 16-year-old Aspros boarded a bus that was headed for cow—and Cornell—country to pursue an undergraduate degree and earn a doctorate from Cornell. His Cornell experiences furthered his natural-born inclination to improve processes ... to find a better way to do the task at hand.

This innate motivator has served him well throughout his career, driving him to find practical ways to relieve an animal’s suffering and to maximize the quality time that companions—people and pets—have together. It’s also the guiding force he hopes will drive his time as president of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA).

“The veterinary profession is changing,” said Dr. Aspros. “Expectations of veterinarians are changing too. Examples of the James Herriot-bernies of veterinary medicine are getting harder and harder to find. We’re seeing changes in the delivery of veterinary services—where the veterinarian is called upon more and more to be a consultant and less and less to provide routine preventive care. Today, clients expect high tech capabilities from veterinarians, the kind of care that rivals what can be found in a human hospital. Through it all, though, one thing hasn’t changed: the need to develop relationships built on honesty and trust with your clients.”

Those kinds of relationships require intense listening skills and a willingness to be present—to understand and participate in the immediate world around you. As the AVMA president-elect, Dr. Aspros has been doing this for the last year. Next month, he expects to further his commitment to conducting an environmental scan through active and engaged listening as the leader of the world’s largest professional society for veterinary medicine.

As the president of the AVMA, Dr. Aspros aims to further the mission of the organization. He has been on the executive board since 2006, so he has had a hand in developing the new strategic plan and has helped to identify many of the initiatives currently on the table. Specifically, Dr. Aspros expects to focus on two areas: making the Association as relevant as it can possibly be to the members and addressing economic issues that are facing the profession as a whole.

“How, for example, do members want to be engaged?” asked Dr. Aspros. “What’s the right mix of face-to-face time and virtual meetings? Technology is enticing, but people get involved in associations to build social connections, to get to know people they wouldn’t otherwise have the chance to meet. It’s this human, social component that needs to be addressed to keep the volunteer enthusiasm and spark alive.”

According to the Association’s strategic plan, Dr. Aspros and his team will identify and promote production efficiencies in the delivery of veterinary services that will enhance profitability; encourage the use of business models that emphasize clinical services and client experience; improve veterinarians’ business management skills to enhance profitability; and promote the value and use of credentialed veterinary technicians within the veterinary healthcare team. (View the complete plan at www.avma.org/about_avma/governance/strategicplanning/strategic_plan_2012-2015.pdf)

“My goal is to move our current plan further along through implementation,” said Dr. Aspros. “This is not a case where I plan to work on a personal agenda. The Association has listened to our members. We know what they want. Now we need to do what we can to help them get there.”
“I have a great love and respect for the hard sciences, physics, computing, mathematics, but there is something about the animalness of biology that calls to me.”
Food you don’t have to fight for, a roof from the rain, companionship from someone who cares—pets don’t need much, but growing legions of homeless animals go without the bare basics. America’s animal shelters offer nearly 7 million pets per year another chance at better lives. Yet all those pets need vets, few shelters can afford veterinary staff, and most general practitioners lack training to serve shelters’ specialized needs.

Sometimes, when resources fall short, human compassion can rise to the challenge. Cornell alumnus David Duffield and his wife, Cheryl, created Maddie’s Fund in 1999, as an avenue to realize their dream: a no-kill nation where all healthy or treatable dogs and cats are guaranteed a loving home.

Professor of epidemiology Dr. Janet Scarlett knows the role veterinary medicine plays in realizing that dream. When Maddie’s Fund awarded Cornell $1.7 million in 2005 to seed the growth of a comprehensive training program in shelter medicine, Dr. Scarlett took the helm as director.

“We are in the life-saving business,” said Dr. Scarlett. “Shelters and the animals they house benefit tremendously from veterinarians trained to reduce disease and suffering in this specialized setting. Our program has helped thousands of animals through consultations and direct care, and our shelter-related research and the students we train will help thousands more.”

As Maddie’s® Shelter Medicine Program at Cornell reaches further than ever to meet the growing need for shelter medicine, Maddie’s Fund awarded Cornell a three-year extension, offering $1.4 million to help propel the program’s expansion and its push toward long-term self-sustainability, which depends on increasing the endowment, particularly in support of students, personnel, and programs.

Later this year, Dr. Scarlett will turn the reins over to Dr. Elizabeth Berliner DVM ’03, who will welcome two new support staff: a clinician and a licensed veterinary technician.

“Outreach is a huge part of our program,” said Dr. Berliner. “We offer phone and site consultations and manage the medical program at the Tompkins County SPCA, providing primary care four days a week. In 2012 we are launching a new fee-based ambulatory consultation service traveling to client shelters in a 60-mile radius. It will train shelter staff in herd health, individual animal medicine, and the use of ‘shelter metrics’ to measure disease risks in populations.”

Shelter medicine is well embedded in Cornell’s curriculum through required and elective course work and the Community Practice Service rotation rounds. Dr. Berliner plans to expand with opportunities for intensive service-learning.

“This Fall we’re launching a new shelter medicine rotation taking students and interns to small rural shelters,” said Dr. Berliner. “We also train two shelter-medicine interns each year in shelter-specific skills: population-level health, high-volume spays and neuters, and shelter metrics.”

Cornell’s training program has already paid off in the wider world of shelter medicine. Its first resident, Dr. Stephanie Janeczko DVM ’04, MS ’09 now works at New York City’s ASPCA, serving the three biggest shelters in the state. Former intern Dr. Kate Riley works for the North Shore Animal League in Port Washington, N.Y., the world’s largest no-kill shelter. Recent intern Dr. Michael Greenberg became a shelter veterinarian for the Dane County Humane Society in Madison, Wis.

“Many veterinarians avoid shelter medicine because it can be overwhelming,” said Dr. Berliner. “It’s one thing to deal with one cat with an upper respiratory infection. It’s another thing to deal with 100. We strive to equip students to feel more comfortable with these challenges.”

Many former students work in private practice but assist their local shelters. At least one testified in a major urban cruelty case shortly after graduation.

From teaching to service, Cornell is creating a model of veterinary care for shelters while training an informed pool of shelter medicine specialists able to serve wherever they go. Cornell greatly appreciates the generous support of the Maddie’s Fund that made this program a reality and their continued support for the next three years will help insure its future!
“Nothing more can be done.” These words would sink the spirit of any loving pet-owner. But as dairy-farm owners and breeders of champion dogs, Jeff Winton and Jim Modica don’t quit easily when it comes to their animals.

Cousins Gracie and Margaret Mary had lived only half the lifespan of whippets when a sudden neurological disorder left both paralyzed right before Christmas. With few options and little time, the men braved blizzards to drive their dogs from New Jersey to Cornell University Hospital for Animals (CUHA).

“We’d just come from hearing they’d have to be euthanized,” said Winton. “Within ten minutes of greeting us the Cornell doctors examined the dogs and said ‘we think we can fix this.’”

A team of specialists and students performed a newly developed spine surgery that saved the whippets’ lives. Gracie went first, and when Winton arrived to take her home on Christmas Eve, he found a surprise.

“I’ll never forget that night,” said Winton. “The staff was throwing a little Christmas party in her honor. She wore a Christmas bandage and was nibbling little treats they’d baked for her. It literally brought tears to my eyes, seeing how truly these people care about pets.”

After Margaret Mary underwent the same procedure, she remained for a week of physical therapy.

“The student working with her would call me with updates twice a day,” said Modica. “She sent videos of Margaret in the rehab pool or sleeping on a bed in the rehabilitator’s office. Their compassion with the dogs extended to us. The girls have gone from not being able to move at all to running around like puppies again. We’ve had them for three years more than we would have if we hadn’t brought them to Cornell, and that’s a joy for which we’ll be forever grateful.”

Inspired by the care they received, the two donated to the College of Veterinary Medicine Annual Fund and the Annual Fund of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, where Winton had earned his bachelor’s degree. Wanting to contribute something more, Winton started thinking back to his undergraduate days.

“I was the first of my farming family to go to college,” said Winton. “Scholarships enabled me to come to Cornell and to build my career without bearing the huge burden of debt. I thought if we could do the same for a veterinary student we would be helping someone who might go on to help other people’s pets.”

Thus the Gracie and Margaret Mary Professional Scholarship Fund was born. Established to support students interested in studying neurological disorders like the one that once threatened its namesakes, the scholarship will benefit its first recipient in 2012.
More than 440 alumni and guests gathered at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University for Reunion Weekend, June 7-10, 2012. 234 reunion-year alumni, an outstanding 33% attendance rate from the classes ending in 2 and 7, returned to celebrate reunions from their fifth to their 60th.

Over the course of Reunion Weekend, there were a number of highlights including, but not limited to, the DVM Welcome Reception, tours of the Animal Health Diagnostic Center and sections of the Cornell University Hospital for Animals, the ever-popular DVM BBQ and class dinners and the State of the College Address by Dean Michael I. Kotlikoff. Cornell University President David Skorton offered brief remarks at the Welcome Reception and extended thanks to the class chairs who encouraged classmates to attend Reunion and support the College.

With 60% of the class making a gift, the Class of 1977 took the Dean’s Cup at this year’s Reunion celebration. The Cup is awarded to the reunion class out of school 50 years or fewer, with the highest percent of the class making a gift to the College of Veterinary Medicine. Class of ’77 co-chairs Ann Huntington and Bill Thonsen are to be congratulated for their leadership and for their determination to have the Class of ’77 join the distinguished group of awardees over the years.

The Class of 1982 stood above all other reunion classes by presenting the College with the largest gift: $86,775. The total raised by all reunion classes was $254,827 from 36% of all alumni in a reunion year. Our thanks go to each and every one of you who supported the College this year with a gift. Your support truly makes a difference.

Visit http://www.vet.cornell.edu/alumni/reunion/ to see pictures from Reunion 2012, and mark your calendars for Reunion 2013: June 6-9. Check our website and your mailbox for more information.
Pictures from Reunion 2012 can be viewed at http://www.vet.cornell.edu/alumni/reunion/
reunion 2012
Class Giving
(Totals as of Reunion)

Class of 1947
$125
18% participation

Class of 1952
$5,259
39% participation

Class of 1957
$41,906
64% participation

Class of 1962
$13,616
50% participation

Class of 1967
$13,909
51% participation

Class of 1972
$28,030
40% participation

Class of 1977
$23,876
60% participation

Class of 1982
$86,775
49% participation

Class of 1987
$12,660
30% participation

Class of 1992
$17,291
34% participation

Class of 1997
$6,165
31% participation

Class of 2002
$480
9% participation

Class of 2007
$4,735
18% participation
Class of 1959
Duane Kennedy, DVM
Wernersville, PA
In March 2011 my wife, Marilyn, and I entered the Phoebe Barks Village retirement community in Wernersville, PA. It is a wonderful environment. The other veterinary member of the community is Keith Ortz, who, with Carol, provides many voluntary benefits to all residents.

Class of 1961
Ronald W. Harling, DVM
Holley, NY
On February 11, 2012, in Grand Junction, TN, Dr. Harling was inducted into the Brittany Field Trial Hall of Fame at the National Bird Dog Museum. Dr. Harling has served regional and national Brittany clubs, bred “some of the finest dogs in the country,” and mentored many people in the “Brittany world,” the Hall of Fame stated in honoring its newest member. He first became serious about competing in field trials in 1985, when he set the goal to win a national championship. With the help of a professional trainer, Dr. Harling won his first national crown in 1996 and his second in 2008. Dr. Harling likes to work with the dogs when they are young, paying close attention to those that display strong hunting instincts. If he sees one with the right potential, the handler will take over the training, working with the dog full-time. Dr. Harling stated he has tried to preserve a hunting way of life that has been important to his family for generations. “Before, this was a break from work,” Harling said about his passion for Brittanies. “It got me outdoors and doing things. It’s been a whole family activity. All of the kids have been involved.”

Class of 1964
Edward Eisner, DVM
Centennial, CO
Dr. Edward Eisner was recently the recipient of the Mitex Golden Scaler Award and the Peter Emily International Veterinary Dental Foundation Service Award for his work in veterinary dentistry.

Class of 1971
Lloyd Meisels, DVM
Fort Lauderdale, FL
Congratulations to Coral Springs Animal Hospital, Coral Springs, FL, for receiving top honors from the judges in the 2012 Veterinary Economics Hospital Design Competition by being named Hospital of the Year for Excellence in Design. A former athletic club turned veterinarian hospital, Coral Springs Animal Hospital takes up more than 19,500 square feet and sits on a busy thoroughfare for high visibility. The design team kept the shell of the building and transformed the interior into a multifaceted veterinary facility. The judges loved the hospital’s impressive exterior, welcoming interior, and organized floor plan. Dr. Meisels and his team earned kudos for his design efforts before. In 1987, the practice earned a Mort Award in the Hospital Design Competition.

Class of 1976
Peter J. Freyburger, DVM
North Tonawanda, NY
Dr. Freyburger was inducted in the February 21, 2012, edition of the Buffalo News for his interim appointment as veterinarian at the SPCA of Niagara. Looking forward to the future and feeling a sense of responsibility to improve workings of the Niagara County SPCA, and to do it on behalf of all the veterinarians in Erie and Niagara counties, Dr. Freyburger accepted the six-month appointment and will provide the necessary veterinary oversight to make needed changes and improvements. Dr. Freyburger stated, “I hope to work with Amy Lewis, interim executive director, so we can create a facility that Niagara County can be proud of.”

Class of 1977
Roger G. Ellis, DVM
Granville, NY
Dr. Ellis was featured in the Friday, January 27, 2012, Press Republican (Plattsburgh, NY) as he was guest speaker at the First United Methodist Church where he shared his experiences of 25 years of service to Heifer International. The non-profit organization’s mission is to work with those living in developing nations by giving them livestock to improve their nutrition and increase their income. “A key component of the project is when people in third world nations receive animals and training, they make a promise to give the first newborn female to a community member,” states Dr. Ellis. Dr. Ellis received the president’s Volunteer Service Award in 2010. He spread the message of Heifer International because of a woman he met in Thailand. “I do this because of a visit to northern Thailand. I was sitting in a schoolhouse when a woman came up to me and said, ‘I know I’ll never get to the U.S. to thank the people. I hope you can do that for me.’ It was really moving.”

Class of 1979
Peggy E. Burgess, DVM
Southampton, MA
Dr. Burgess joined Riverbend Animal Hospital, 43 Russell St., Hadley, MA, as associate veterinarian. With more than 25 years’ experience practicing veterinary medicine, Dr. Burgess will oversee the medical service of the hospital.

Class of 1984
Daniella J. Schutzengel, DVM
Wellfleet, MA
Dr. Schutzengel opened Ark Angel Animal Hospital in South Wellfleet, MA, on February 14, 2012. Ark Angel Animal Hospital will have state-of-the-art veterinary equipment, including anesthetic and cardiac monitoring systems and digital diagnostic X-ray and digital dental X-ray machines. Schutzengel practices medicine and a wide range of soft-tissue surgery, primarily on dogs and cats. She is also certified in veterinary dental treatment.

Class of 1991
Gary Block, DVM
East Greenwich, RI
On the evening of December 7, 2011, while attending the annual meeting of the Rhode Island Veterinary Medical Association in Newport, our classmate, Dr. Gary Block, was invited by the president of the society to ascend to the podium, whereupon he was then granted by the fellow colleagues of that esteemed and august body the group’s highest and most coveted accolade: Rhode Island Veterinarian of the Year. In her veritable remarks following the award presentation, Dr. Marcia Aabin cited Dr. Block’s beneficence and numerous contributions to the profession of veterinary medicine, ranging from his tireless work to advance the field of companion animal medicine to his passionate advocacy for the awareness and the teaching of veterinary medical ethics. Dr. Block is a co-owner of Ocean State Veterinary Specialists in Greenwich, RI.

Richard Orzech, DVM
Trumansburg, NY
When Dr. Richard Orzech and his wife, Theresa, entered the diocese of the city of Salerno, Italy, on the feast day (September 21) of St. Matthew, and solemnly stood before the tomb of the great Evangelist, it was the long-awaited culmination of their five-year-long world tour to visit the earthly remains of all of the 12 apostles of Jesus, a feat claimed by no other person in recent times. Their journeys took them from the Eastern Anatolia Region of Turkey to the west coast of Greece and to the heart of Spanish Galicia; from Lake Tana at the source of the Blue Nile in the Ethiopian highlands to Germany and all the way up to the Scottish Highlands. Dr. Orzech and Theresa are founders and president/owners of the Trumansburg Veterinary Clinic, located in glorious Trumansburg, NY.
Class of 1994

Joseph A. Impellizzeri, DVM
Hopewell Junction, NY
Dr. Impellizzeri and his staff at the Veterinary Specialty Center of the Hudson Valley (VSCV) are pleased to share that they are now able to offer electrochemotherapy (ECT) to treat canine and feline cancer. Using a specific instrument, electrochemotherapy uses an electric current to carry the chemotherapy drug directly to the tumor, killing the tumor and sparing the surrounding normal tissue. The procedure is performed under a single anesthesia, similar to localized radiation treatment, but without the radiation side effects, the need for multiple treatments, and the high costs. Success in veterinary oncology has been well documented in peer-reviewed publications against melanomas, soft tissue sarcomas, mast cell tumors, squamous cell carcinomas, brain tumors, and mammary tumors. For more information visit http://www.vscv.com/electrochemotherapy.php

Class of 2005

Jeff Vogel, DVM
Dr. Vogel joined the staff of Veterinary Emergency, Critical Care & Referral Care Center of New Hampshire, Newington, NH, on February 1, 2012. One of Dr. Vogel’s goals is to reach out to veterinarians and their clients, promoting the value and benefits of effectively treating skin and ear conditions in pets.

Class of 2010

Kathryn Chapin Hertzlin, DVM
Rochester, NY
Kathryn Chapin Hertzlin and Richard Adam Pappert were married August 27, 2011, at St. Peter’s By The Lake at Old Forge, NY. The bride is a veterinarian at Honeoye Falls Veterinary Hospital.

Diana M Puchalski, DVM
Yorkville, NY
On March 30, 2012, I became the sole practice owner of the Beaver Meadow Veterinary Clinic in Barneveld, NY. We care for mostly dogs and cats, but I have begun to expand our small exotic mammal client base. If you have any small furries that need special care, please send them my way! Hope everyone is well, and I miss all of you from CUVM!!!

From Classroom to Polo Matches …

Your gifts to the College of Veterinary Medicine Annual Fund support scholarships for tomorrow's veterinarians like Mandy Gurlph, Class of ’14. Mandy's love of horses extends to coaching Cornell's undergraduate polo team and active participation in the American Association of Equine Practitioners. Every Annual Fund gift brings a Cornell education, including experiences beyond the classroom and clinic, within reach of students like Mandy.

Thank you!

www.vet.cornell.edu/gifts

IN MEMORIAM

SINCE THE LAST ISSUE OF SCOPES, THE COLLEGE HAS BEEN NOTIFIED OF THE PASSINGS OF THE FOLLOWING:

Dr. Mark R. Crandall ’39, March 21, 2012
Dr. Richard L. Crissey ’58, January 19, 2012
Dr. Joseph R. DeLeo ’69, March 13, 2012
Dr. Henry Deutsch ’50, April 18, 2012
Dr. Andrew Malcolm Draper ’38, March 2, 2012
Dr. Richard P. Draut ’53, January 1, 2012
Dr. Olen “Slim” Easton ’51, December 21, 2011
Dr. Barbara Gruppo ’87, April 21, 2009
Dr. Theodore Hoch ’58, March 20, 2012
Dr. William P. King ’44, February 21, 2011
Dr. Hermann Meyer, PhD ’57, January 1, 2012
Dr. Wellington Moore Jr., PhD ’61, December 14, 2011
Dr. Hallsey R. Palmer ’43, March 2, 2012
Dr. Michael J. Pollock ’83, February 19, 2012
Dr. John F. Van Vleet ’62, January 5, 2012
Dr. Jean T. Wilson Sr. ’52, March 23, 2012
Dean Michael J. Kotlikoff congratulated members of the Class of 2012 at the traditional hooding ceremony and encouraged them to remain true to the personal qualities that served them well as veterinarians-in-training.

“As veterinarians, your clients will benefit from your knowledge and technical skills, but they will benefit equally from your character—your ability to guide them and support them in the often difficult choices that surround animal health care. Treating animals and humans with compassion and respect and exhibiting modesty and humility in the face of this complex relationship are professional attributes that define the veterinarian. Balancing the tension between what can be done and what should be done; your ability to understand and respect the needs, capabilities, and limits of your clients; and representing the welfare of your patients will in many ways define your success. Your compassion and humility, your character, is what brought you to us in the first place, and it is the thing that will most define your future success.”
Mark your calendars!

5th Annual
New York State Veterinary Conference

September 27-30, 2012
Ithaca, NY

www.vet.cornell.edu/nysvc

Multi-Species
Wet Labs & Lectures
Networking & Exhibits