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Alumni Association Executive Board

Please join us in welcoming the newest members of the Alumni Association Executive Board to their new roles.

Dr. Pasquale Meleleo '08

Dr. Pasquale Meleleo '08 moved to Staten Island at the age seven from Italy. After graduating high school he enlisted in the US Navy, where he served as an electrical operator on a nuclear submarine.

He went on to receive a BS in biology from CUNY and then graduated from Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine in 2008. Upon graduation he went directly into companion animal private practice and in 2011 started his own practice. In a relatively short time, Pleasant Plains Animal Hospital has outgrown its current location as a two doctor practice. During this winter the hospital will move to a larger location and hire another veterinarian. Pasquale will also be completing an MBA program at NYU Stern in May 2015. Pasquale enjoys his time away from his practice with his wife and their two sets of twins. He enjoys road cycling any time he gets a chance.



Dr. Patricia Ernst Grinnell '97



Dr. Patricia Ernst Grinnell '97 has been the owner/partner of Aspetuck Animal Hospital from January 2012 to the present. She attended high school on Long Island, N.Y and pursued undergraduate studies at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. She has worked in small animal practice exclusively since graduation and has been a member of the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society graduate in 2005. Grinnell lives in New Milford, Conn. with her husband and two children, ages 12 and 14. She is a member of New Milford Lions Club, Kent Singers, First Congregational Church of Washington, and Pratt Nature Center.

Dr. Georgette Wilson '93

Dr. Georgette Wilson '93 graduated from the University of Pennsylvania 1989 with a degree in biology and a minor in chemistry. She received her veterinary degree from Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine in 1993. She practiced in Hoboken, New Jersey for one year right after graduation, but then decided to return to academia, completing a small animal rotating internship at the University of Tennessee. Wilson spent an additional eight years in companion animal private practice in the Greater New York area before transitioning to a career in veterinary pharmaceuticals. She currently serves as the director of Scientific and Medical Affairs at Hartz. She has appeared on local and national television, on the radio, and in print. She currently resides in New York City with her family. In her spare time she enjoys traveling.



Dr. Eric Christensen '99

Dr. Eric Christensen '99 grew up in northern New Jersey but considers Ithaca to be his second home as he spent nearly twelve years on the Cornell University campus. Following graduation from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in 1995 and the College of Veterinary Medicine in 1999, he completed an internship in emergency medicine and surgery at Rowley Memorial Animal Hospital, a large regional referral center in Springfield, MA. He subsequently returned to Cornell and served on the veterinary faculty for three years teaching anatomy, physiology, emergency medicine and small animal surgery and medicine. In 2003, Dr. Christensen left the hallowed ground of Cornell to joined Murray Hill Veterinary Associates, a 10 doctor small and exotic animal practice in New Providence, NJ. His particular veterinary interests include emergency medicine, pain management, and shelter medicine. He enjoys coordinating staff education, mentoring the many young prospective veterinary students who spend time at his practice, and working side by side with several other recent Cornell



graduates. Dr. Christensen lives outside of Flemington, NJ with his wonderful wife, Cory, and young children Luke, Madeleine, and Jake, all of whom still believe that Daddy does nothing more than play with puppies and kittens all day.

Dr. Lawrence W. Bartholf '65

At age 12, Dr. Lawrence W. Bartholf '65 experienced a defining moment in which he knew he wanted to be a veterinarian. Raised on a farm in Western New York, he witnessed the disastrous effects of the family's dairy cows having gorged on a freshly harvested wheat crop. The veterinarian treated the cattle, they all survived and that day Bartholf realized he wanted to bring comfort to folks

like the veterinarian did for his father. Following graduation, he worked as a large and small animal practitioner in New Jersey and served as a Captain in the U.S. Army Veterinary Corp from 1966 to 1968 with service in Vietnam. In 1969, he moved back to New York State and began practicing in the Hudson Valley, where he has been a self-employed large animal practitioner for nearly 40 years. He served as NYSVMS President in 2005 and represented the Hudson Valley Veterinary Medical Society on the NYSVMS Executive Board from 1997 to 2004. Since 2007, he has served as Treasurer of the NYSVMS. He received the AVMA's Animal Welfare Veterinarian of the Year Award in 1990, and was named the New York State Humane Society's Veterinarian of the Year in 1988. Additionally, he was recognized by the Humane Society of the United States in 1989 with an Award of Appreciation.



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Your newest representatives

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Elephant doctor leaves legacy of conservation and kindness

Dr. Jim Laurita '89, executive director of Hope Elephants sanctuary in Hope, Maine, passed away Tuesday, September 9, after an accident while tending to the elephants he cared for. He is remembered for his compassion for animals, particularly elephants, to which he devoted much of his life.

Laurita had experience working at the Bronx Zoo and as head elephant trainer for a wildlife park in Oregon. He had traveled to India to work with elephants before settling in Hope, Maine to start a

veterinary practice in Maine. In 2011 Laurita sold his thriving practice to focus on establishing Hope Elephants. Living steps away from the facility, he became the foundation's 24/7 elephant caregiver, an enthusiastic educator on the importance of wildlife conservation, and an energetic collaborator with like-minded organizations worldwide.



“Jim’s passion for all animals, but especially elephants was boundless,” said Hope Elephants in a statement released on its Facebook page. “It was Jim’s ability share that passion with all around him that not only helped to make our organization a reality, but also enriched and enhanced the lives of all those who had a chance to know Jim. It was through education that Jim passed on his passion and the importance of wildlife conservation.”

Hope Elephants’ mission is to provide a unique and caring home for injured and aging elephants, and to provide an educational program that inspires visitors to participate in wildlife conservation. They collaborate with individuals and organizations committed to wildlife conservation, especially those working to protect and preserve elephants.

The sanctuary provides state-of-the-art medical and physical therapy, and nutritional support. All care is administered by a professional team of experienced elephant handlers and veterinarians. Its elephant habitat consists of a 52’ X 60’ barn with a vaulted ceiling designed and built for caring for elephants. It opens to a large outdoor paddock where the elephants roam varied terrain, including a mud wallow, orchard, and shade trees. The light-filled barn with a radiant-heated floor is covered with screened sand.

After more than 40 years performing for the public, Hope Elephants’ Asian elephant residents, Rosie and Opal, needed specialized medical care. They had gone to the Endangered Ark Foundation in Oklahoma after leaving the circus where Laurita had met them in the late 1970s. Laurita designed the Maine facility to offer care more specific to their needs.

Rosie’s trunk is partially paralyzed due to nerve damage. She is unable to drink water easily and has adapted a throwing motion to feed herself. Nerve damage in her shoulder has led to gait problems and arthritic joints in her forelegs. Opal suffers from limb and joint deterioration and requires physical therapy to alleviate some of her pain and discomfort. They moved to Hope, and under Laurita’s leadership, the sanctuary successfully developed and applied innovative treatments that are improving Rosie and Opal’s quality of life and that will benefit other injured elephants.

“For Jim, his first thought, always, was for the well-being of ‘his girls,’” Hope Elephants said in a statement on its website. “The sacrifices that he made to make Hope Elephants possible and sustainable were incredible. Everyone who knew him appreciated that his commitment was total.”

The sanctuary’s board of directors elected to return Rosie and Opal to their previous home, the Endangered Ark Foundation in Oklahoma, where they are reported to have settled back in comfortably with the foundation’s larger herd.

The future direction of Hope Elephants is under discussion; meanwhile, the nonprofit has set up The Jim Laurita Fund to help raise the \$300,000 the organization owed Laurita at his death. Contributions

will go to his surviving family. <http://hopeelephants.org/lauritafund/>

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Veterinary alum receives national public health award

Lt. Cmdr. Danielle Buttke, DVM('09)/PhD ('10) received the 2014 James H. Steele Veterinary Public Health Award from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in April at the 63rd annual Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) Conference.

The award is named for the first chief of the CDC's Veterinary Public Health Division. It is given to a current or former EIS officer who has made outstanding contributions in the field of veterinary public health. This award recognizes Buttke's outstanding contributions in the investigation, control, and

prevention of zoonotic diseases and other animal-related human health problems.

"Danielle is one of the brightest students I've met in recent years," said Dr. Alfonso Torres, associate dean for public policy at the College of Veterinary Medicine. "She was a talented researcher but wanted to do applied public health on the ground. She was very determined to develop this career path. She is a great example of the one health concept, integrating wildlife, human diseases, animal health, lab research, and fieldwork into her career."

Buttke's talent for veterinary and public health showed early and strongly. She earned three degrees concurrently: a DVM and PhD from Cornell's Dual Degree program in veterinary medicine and comparative biomedical sciences, and an MPH in global environmental health from Johns Hopkins University.



In 2010 she joined the EIS offered through the CDC, a two-year post-graduate training program of service and on-the-job learning for health professionals interested in the practice of applied epidemiology. As part of her service she investigated a strange new illness spreading throughout Tigray, the northern region of Ethiopia. In this dry, mountainous area, people living in remote homes and villages were coming down with what appeared to be the same unknown disease. Residents of Tigray were all too familiar with the tropical diseases common in this region, and they recognized this illness was not one of them.

People who contracted the disease developed swollen, painful abdomens and then lost weight. Some of them had trouble breathing as the fluid in their abdomens crowded against their lungs. Three or four family members in one household might become ill, while others living in the same household did not. However, in some families, everyone died from the disease. Buttke proved instrumental in dispelling the notion that it was an infectious disease, proving the symptoms were in fact due to intoxication from eating raw livers of sheep that had eaten a toxic plant.

In her current role as the one-health coordinator for the National Park Service (NPS), Buttke proved crucial to solving another deadly public health mystery. In 2012, several visitors at Yosemite National Park contracted what was eventually recognized as hantavirus, a potentially fatal virus transmitted by mouse droppings. Three people died. Buttke was able to help trace the outbreak to a single campsite, where she found tents infested with infected mice.

"When you pulled back that canvas, you could see there were mice living in the void space between the walls," Buttke says. "They were nesting in the insulation."

The tents were destroyed and precautions were taken to prevent future infestations. Buttke continues to work for the NPS as one of two epidemiologists responding to urgent and emergent public health issues in over 400 National Park units hosting nearly 280 million visitors annually.

"I love working for the National Park Service because there is such an incredible sense of morale," said Buttke in an online piece on her NPS work. "People care so much about their jobs and what we do is very important. I take a tremendous sense of pride in feeling that what I am doing is helping to preserve and protect not just the health of visitors but also the resources in these parks, and it really is such a tremendous resource and unbelievable opportunity to work to preserve the nation's parks."

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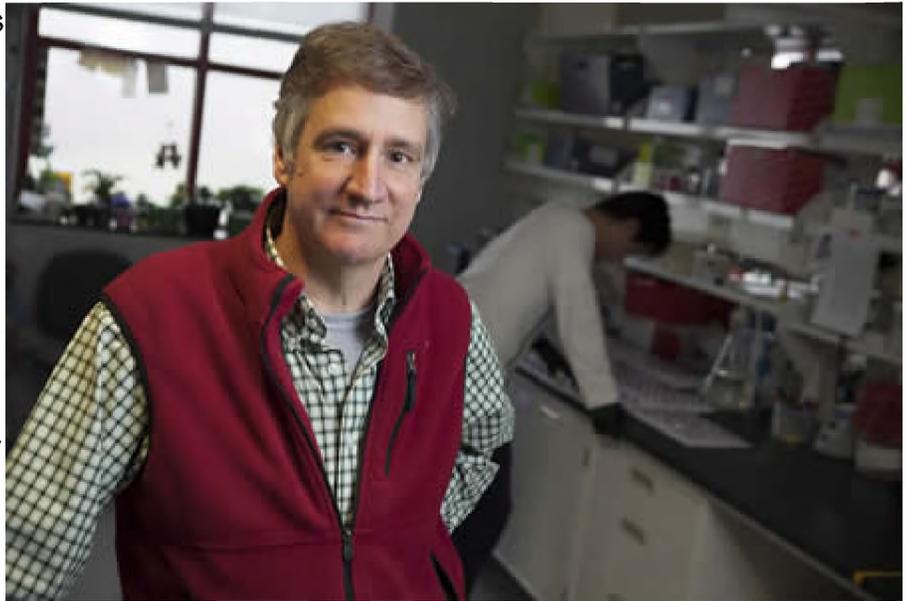
Inflammation-associated gene linked to skin cancer development

New work on an inflammation-associated enzyme linked to cancer development shows overproduction of this protein can lead to squamous cell carcinoma, a common form of skin cancer.

This finding, published online September 11 in the journal *Cancer Research*, provides the first genetic link between the activity of the enzyme, called PAD2, and cancer progression and provides important

supporting evidence for further studies aimed at using PAD2 inhibitors to block carcinoma progression in humans, said the researchers.

Lead author Scott Coonrod, the Judy Wilpon Associate Professor of Cancer Biology at the Baker Institute for Animal Health in Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine, has studied links between PAD2 and other PAD (peptidylarginine deiminase) enzymes and cancer for some time. Those prior studies suggested that PAD2 plays an important role in regulating gene activity during cancer progression; however, a direct link between PADs



and tumor progression had not yet been proven. Other work from the lab suggested that PAD2 is found at high concentrations in several tumor types, but it was not known whether these elevated levels of enzyme were causing cancer or merely a consequence of tumor progression.

To directly test for links between PAD2 and cancer, the researchers tested whether overproduction of this enzyme caused cancer. Outcomes from their studies suggest that increased PAD2 activity can, in fact, cause cancer and Coonrod thinks that PAD2 is likely enhancing cancer growth rates by stimulating inflammation pathways.

"Inflammation has long been known to play an important role in the development of many types of cancer," he says. "Recent studies provide strong evidence that inflammation represents one of the 10 hallmarks of cancer. It's becoming clear that the activity of PAD enzymes seems to be low in most normal tissues, but becomes elevated in a whole range of inflammatory diseases – like rheumatoid arthritis, colitis and lupus. PAD activity is very high in the affected tissues and seems to be driving a lot of the inflammatory conditions that cause these diseases."

To test whether PAD2 might be promoting inflammation, Coonrod and his colleagues looked for classical markers of inflammation in the growths and found that a number of these markers were significantly elevated in the tumors. To further test their hypothesis, they overexpressed PAD2 in cell lines to better understand how the enzyme might behave in humans. They found that PAD2 overproduction made these human cells more invasive and also enhanced inflammatory marker expression.

Together, these studies suggest that increased PAD activity in human skin, and potentially other tissues, promotes an inflammatory environment that is favorable for cancer development, says Coonrod. Importantly, Coonrod's longtime collaborator, Paul Thompson at the University of Massachusetts Memorial Medical Center, has developed a range of new PAD inhibitors and the team is now testing whether these compounds might suppress carcinoma progression in mouse models of both skin and mammary glands.

The lead authors on Dr. Coonrod' paper entitled, "PAD2 Overexpression in Transgenic Mice Promotes Spontaneous Skin Neoplasia", are postdoctoral associate, Dr. John McElwee, Ph.D. '13, and Dr. Sunish Mohanan, Ph.D. '14, who carried out this work for their thesis projects in the Coonrod's lab.

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Cornell University Sesquicentennial

Soon, around the globe, Cornell will be celebrating our University's first 150 years. The history of the teaching of veterinary medicine at Cornell predates the establishment of the College in 1894. Shortly after the University was founded in 1865, Ezra Cornell insisted that a chair of veterinary medicine be instituted. He instructed Andrew D. White, the University's first president, to seek the best-qualified person to teach courses in veterinary medicine and surgery. Legend has it that, as White sailed off in search of world-class faculty to bring back to the University, Ezra Cornell called out "Don't forget the horse doctor!"



James Law, a distinguished young veterinarian from Edinburgh, Scotland was recruited by the University's first president Andrew Dixon White. Dr. Law became the first professor of veterinary medicine and surgery at Cornell and at an American university in 1868. This momentous event would provide the foundation for advancement in veterinary medicine in the United States.



The College proudly joins the University in celebrating the Sesquicentennial anniversary of Cornell's founding. Learn more about the Sesquicentennial and its multiple celebrations here: <http://150.cornell.edu/>

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Dean Kotlikoff joins College community in ALS Ice Bucket Challenge



Dr. Michael Kotlikoff, the Austin O. Hoey Dean of Veterinary Medicine joined Dr. Carolyn McDaniel and approximately 65 members of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine community accepted the ALS (Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) Ice Bucket Challenge after being nominated by Dr. Robin Davisson and the Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine.

The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge has become a viral campaign to raise funds and awareness of what is commonly referred to as "Lou Gehrig's Disease," a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. Once challenged, participants have 24 hours to donate to ALS research through the ALS Association or dump a bucket of ice water on their heads. However, it has become common for those who choose the latter to also donate to ALS research. The challenge at the College was organized by a student, Oneeka Barker '18.

"We're here today to dump ice water on ourselves not just for fun, but to give ourselves a numbing sensation to simulate the lives of what the people who have this terrible disease go through," said Barker

Barker also nominated all other veterinary colleges who have not yet completed the challenge, along with Weill Cornell Medical College. Kotlikoff expressed his acceptance of the challenge not only to help raise awareness for the impact the disease has on humans, but also the impact of a related disease on dogs.

"There's a lot that we don't understand about the disease," said Kotlikoff. "ALS research helps us learn about a disease that we can cure to help both dogs and people."

Right before the water was dumped, Kotlikoff issued his challenge to Provost Kent Fuchs, Vice-Provost Judy Appleton, Paul Streeter, John Siliciano, Barbara Knuth, and Barbara Brown. With all of the fun had by the participants, Barker gave one final reminder to everyone about why they were there.

“We’re here to urge everyone to donate, donate, donate,” said Barker.

To donate to help ALS research, please visit www.alsa.org.



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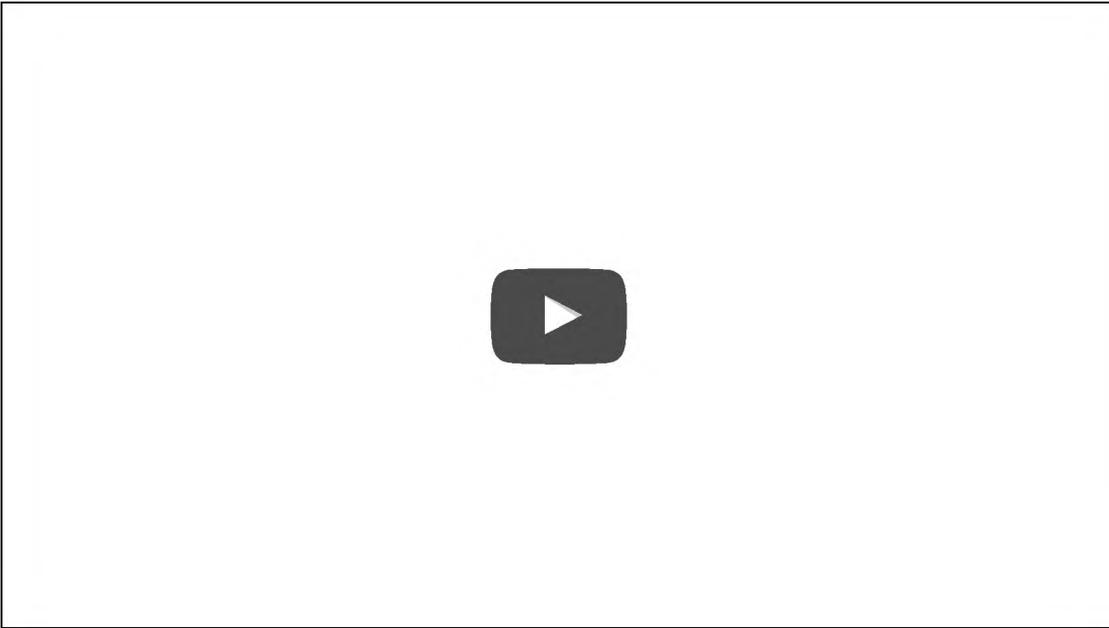
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Our thanks to you

With sincere appreciation of your support of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, please enjoy this short video of thanks.



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Theresa Hubbell '17 prepares to serve United States Army animals

Growing up surrounded by hundreds of animals led Theresa Hubbell '17 to pursue an education in veterinary medicine. Hubbell also has the desire to serve her country and was awarded an Army scholarship allowing her to pursue her education while also fulfilling that dream. After she graduates, Hubbell will work on an Army base taking care of service dogs, horses, and pets of Army families. With the Army stressing that she will be an officer first and a veterinarian second, Hubbell is excited

by the leadership opportunity this experience will present to her. After her time serving her country, Hubbell would like to pursue a career in sports horse medicine focusing on a holistic approach.

