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Veterinary Care of Ithaca sets up clinic at Cornell after fire

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(Photo: Matt Steecker / Ithaca Journal)

Amazing circumstances can come out of unfortunate situations.

Two months ago, wires caught on fire in an attic at [Veterinary Care of Ithaca](http://www.ithacajournal.com/story/news/local/2018/08/09/firefighters-extinguish-fire-veterinary-care-ithaca/948670002/) ([/story/news/local/2018/08/09/firefighters-extinguish-fire-veterinary-care-ithaca/948670002/](http://www.ithacajournal.com/story/news/local/2018/08/09/firefighters-extinguish-fire-veterinary-care-ithaca/948670002/)). All of Veterinary Care's staff, clients and patients were able to leave the building safely, but the fire closed the building for repairs and renovations.

Three weeks after the fire, Dr. Jennifer Biasillo, the owner of the clinic and a veterinarian who graduated from Cornell in 2012, was able to temporarily move her practice to the Cornell University campus.

At the Cornell Small Animal Community Practice, the Veterinary Care staff is continuing its practice of treating cats and dogs, and on less common occasions also is treating rabbits.

"It's pretty amazing," said Biasillo, of Dryden. "The fire happened on a Wednesday. By Friday, I came here. It took three weeks to fix the specifics. We were lucky."



Dr. Jennifer Biasillo comforts Ami, a goldendoodle who was being treated for an upset stomach. (Photo: Matt Steecker / Ithaca Journal)

To help make the arrangement possible, the college worked with various parts of Cornell's administration, including risk management, real estate, taxation, environmental health and safety, and university counsel.

The Veterinary Care of Ithaca staff now treats about 40 to 50 patients per day at their temporary location. Veterinary Care of Ithaca has five veterinarians, 12 staff members and more than 5,000 active patients.

Biasillo's practice is currently using two out of the five exam rooms at the Small Animal Community Practice.

"We can do everything here. We can offer a full range of services," Biasillo said. "We are treating the same number of patients. We are still working at full capacity, but it took us a few weeks to get to this point."

Biasillo said she anticipates moving back to her renovated clinic in December. Construction at Veterinary Care of Ithaca started last week.

More: [Fire damages roof and ceiling at Veterinary Care of Ithaca \(/story/news/local/2018/08/09/firefighters-extinguish-fire-veterinary-care-ithaca/948670002/\)](#)

More: [Cornell University graduate dies in bus accident in Pennsylvania \(/story/news/local/2018/10/15/cornell-university-alumna-dies-bus-accident-northern-pennsylvania/1647428002/\)](#)

More: [Five questions with the retiring manager of the Ithaca Wegmans \(/story/money/2018/10/15/six-questions-retiring-manager-ithaca-wegmans/1570471002/\)](#)

"The fire was in the treatment area behind our reception desk," Biasillo said. "Both had to be gutted. I have worked with a vet architect in Colorado to have them redone. When we go home, we will have a new space, which I am looking forward to."



Bare, a papillon, had a dental procedure. (Photo: Matt Steecker / Ithaca Journal)

The contract between Cornell and Veterinary Care of Ithaca includes an agreement that students can shadow Veterinary Care of Ithaca's appointments, Biasillo said.

"The benefit to Cornell is that it gives us the ability to have students interact with (Biasillo), and see a different practice style and structure," said Dr. Meg Thompson, associate dean for hospital operations and director of the Cornell University Hospital for Animals. "They have been great partners."

Biasillo's use of the Small Animal Community Practice at Cornell demonstrates the strong town-and-gown relationship the university shares with its surrounding area.

"The veterinary school has a unique town-and-gown relationship with the local community and businesses," Thompson said. "The veterinary school has both a diagnostic lab and a teaching hospital that helps both clients and local veterinarians. It is constantly supporting local businesses and the community."

The College of Veterinary Medicine's outreach services include the Southside Community Clinic, Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program, a pet loss support hotline, a pet visitation program, an annual charity bike ride to support the Patient Assistance Fund at the Hospital for Animals, as well as other programs.

Assisting the Veterinary Care staff is a traditional form of town-and-gown support, as opposed to the outreach services the college provides daily, Thompson said.

At the Small Animal Community Practice, students are currently shadowing Biasillo's staff once or twice a week.



Dr. Elizabeth Barns, a veterinarian for Veterinary Care of Ithaca, removed a teeth during a dental procedure on Bare, a papillon dog. Technicians Katy Janower (center) and Jamie Small assisted Banrs during the procedure. (Photo: Matt Steecker / Ithaca Journal)

"It was incredibly generous of Cornell to open its doors for us," said Dr. Elizabeth Barns, a veterinarian for Veterinary Care of Ithaca. "We continue to offer our level of surgery and care at the same level of excellence as we did at our home on Court Street. The animals are doing okay here, and everyone is doing well."

Barns said interacting with students has made the Veterinary Care staff reminisce about their time in college.



Jamie Small, a licensed veterinary technician, works as the Veterinary Care of Ithaca staff finishes a dental procedure on Bare, a papillon dog. (Photo: Matt Steecker / Ithaca Journal)

"It's neat having students who can come over and ask questions," Barns said.

Biasillo said both her staff and the students are enjoying the atmosphere of practicing in the Small Animal Community Practice, and the students are getting a "feel for practice" as to what an appointment would be like in a functioning animal hospital.



Bare, a papillon dog, had a dental procedure. (Photo: Matt Steecker / Ithaca Journal)

Biasillo began her career as a licensed veterinary technician, certified in canine rehabilitation. She ran a rehabilitation facility, working on pets with a variety of disorders.

She enrolled in the College of Veterinary Medicine just shy of her 30th birthday and worked as a licensed technician throughout school. She then bought the business in 2015.

"What happened was a tragedy, but what came out of it was amazing," Biasillo said. "I had clients who would reach out and say, 'if you need help, we will help you.'"

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