



[Alumni News](#) > Satellite Facility

## April 2009

### Features

- [College News: Satellite Teaching Facility](#)
- [College News: Blood Bank](#)
- [Young Alum Profile: Ashley Shelton](#)
- [Research: Leela Noronha](#)
- [Student Activities: Pedal for Pets](#)

### Development

- [Charitable Giving](#)

### In Brief

- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Veterinary Alumni Association](#)
- [Class Notes Submissions](#)

### [Recent Issue](#)

### Archives

- [November 2015](#)
- [August 2015](#)
- [April 2015](#)
- [January 2015](#)
- [November 2014](#)
- [August 2014](#)
- [April 2014](#)
- [January 2014](#)
- [November 2013](#)
- [August 2013](#)
- [April 2013](#)
- [January 2013](#)
- [November 2012](#)
- [August 2012](#)
- [November 2011](#)
- [August 2011](#)
- [April 2011](#)
- [August 2010](#)
- [April 2010](#)
- [November 2009](#)

- [August 2009](#)
- [April 2009](#)

## CURRENT ISSUE

# College News

Dear Alumni and Friends:

The following letter has been sent to all veterinary practitioners in New York State as well as those in a few neighboring counties in New Jersey and Connecticut. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
Mike

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Dear Veterinary Colleagues:

As a result of our recent strategic planning process, which involved faculty, students, and external stakeholders, the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine is exploring options for establishing a satellite referral teaching facility in the New York Metropolitan area. I would like to share with you the reasons why we feel this initiative is vital for the College, as well as what this clinic will do and how it will operate. I have had many conversations with practitioners, faculty, students, and alumni over the course of the last several months and appreciate the time and thoughts that have been shared; I also look forward to additional conversations as we move toward implementation of this component of our plan. Recently, I met with Drs. Paul Amerling and Pat Collins, President and President-Elect, respectively, of the Westchester Rockland Veterinary Medical Society, to discuss our plans and to solicit suggestions as to ways in which the College can contribute to and enhance local veterinary practices, while pursuing our strategic goals. We also discussed the need to directly communicate our plans and vision with all veterinarians in the region, and I am grateful to Paul and Pat for their excellent advice and suggestions.

As the College looks to maintain its role in continually strengthening our profession, it is imperative that our students and house staff see cases that reflect the entire spectrum of veterinary medicine. In Ithaca, our students are increasingly seeing cases that require tertiary care – non-typical and advanced cases that are at the most critical end of the spectrum. Similarly, our house staff, who are some of the most highly selected graduate veterinarians in the country, are increasingly presented with a range of cases that is less than optimal for their training. Nationally, an increasing percentage of residents are being trained in a private referral practice setting that provides limited exposure to academic medicine, decreasing the likelihood that they will develop into the academic trainers and clinician-scientists of the future. These are trends that we expect to continue, and to which Cornell and other veterinary colleges are responding in an effort to ensure the outstanding preparation of the next generation of clinicians and clinician educators/scientists.

At the proposed satellite teaching facility that we expect to locate north of New York City, Cornell house staff will spend regular rotations assisting staff veterinarians, experiencing a broader caseload, and seeing more typical cases. Similarly, veterinary students will observe a more typical referral and emergency practice, learning the pace and expectations of real life medicine and surgery. This model, which has been successfully implemented by numerous human and veterinary academic medical centers, will foster the training of specialists in an environment that includes academic medical support, more closely linking clinical research and specialty medicine. It will also provide the College and the profession with extended opportunities to advance evidence-based medicine through rigorous clinical trials. Importantly, our satellite referral hospital will not engage in general practice, but rather provide the highest quality of specialty medicine available to clients referred by area veterinarians. Following treatment, clients will be sent back to referring veterinarians for appropriate follow up as soon as possible. Referred clients and patients will also have access to leading specialists affiliated with the nation's top-ranked veterinary college, and accordingly to the most cutting edge procedures and protocols. The referral center may also offer 24-hour emergency and critical care services, but this will depend on a variety of factors.

In addition, the metropolitan practice will enable us to extend our continuing education and outreach initiatives, bringing them closer to practices in the New York Metropolitan and Hudson Valley areas. We envision workshops and lectures that will foster interactions between referring veterinarians, specialists, house staff, students, and technicians that will enhance our outreach mission.

I want to assure you that in pursuing these efforts, I will continue to consult and collaborate with veterinarians and stakeholders across the state, and will share updates as the exploratory process develops and our plans become more specific. In the meantime, if you have questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Michael I. Kotlikoff, VMD, PhD

Austin O. Hooey Dean of Veterinary Medicine

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[Alumni News](#) > Blood Bank

## April 2009

### Features

- [College News: Satellite Teaching Facility](#)
- [College News: Blood Bank](#)
- [Young Alum Profile: Ashley Shelton](#)
- [Research: Leela Noronha](#)
- [Student Activities: Pedal for Pets](#)

### Development

- [Charitable Giving](#)

### In Brief

- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Veterinary Alumni Association](#)
- [Class Notes Submissions](#)

### [Recent Issue](#)

### Archives

- [November 2015](#)
- [August 2015](#)
- [April 2015](#)
- [January 2015](#)
- [November 2014](#)
- [August 2014](#)
- [April 2014](#)
- [January 2014](#)
- [November 2013](#)
- [August 2013](#)
- [April 2013](#)
- [January 2013](#)
- [November 2012](#)
- [August 2012](#)
- [November 2011](#)
- [August 2011](#)
- [April 2011](#)
- [August 2010](#)
- [April 2010](#)
- [November 2009](#)



- [August 2009](#)
- [April 2009](#)

## CURRENT ISSUE

# The True Value of a Blood Bank Lives and Breathes

CJ was just a puppy when he was spotted crawling out of a ditch along a major highway. He had a broken hind leg and a fractured front leg, but the splintered bones healed well and Jenifer Lee-Gonyea adopted him. Unfortunately, the accident also tore his diaphragm. A tiny hole that went unnoticed for years, it eventually grew large enough to swallow several organs, including some of his intestine, and to stop the blood supply to these organs. When Lee-Gonyea brought the long, lanky Lab mix to the Cornell University Hospital for Animals (CUHA), he was lethargic with gastrointestinal problems, and he was bleeding internally. He needed surgery, but his platelets and red blood cell counts were too low.



The low platelet count increased the risks associated with surgery because it causes uncontrolled bleeding. With his low red blood cell count, CJ's blood was not carrying enough oxygen to his organs, putting him at risk for organ failure. The CUHA team stabilized CJ with a transfusion of fresh whole blood from a local donor and frequently hard-to-find platelet concentrate, which is stored in the Hospital's on-site blood bank.

"He used every type of service and product our blood bank offers," said Dr. Maureen Luschini, who was the attending doctor. "We could not have done the surgery without the blood products that we get from donors. These products are a precious commodity."

To recover, CJ needed plasma and packed red blood cells, also available from the Hospital's blood bank.

The Hospital's blood bank, sponsored by Purina, Hills, and the College, is prepared to serve a wide variety of animals, including dogs, cats, ferrets, horses, pigs, goats, and cows. Different from traditional animal blood banks, Cornell's donors are not residents of the hospital. Instead, participants are "on call," brought into the Hospital as needed to donate a unit of blood. After the donation, the animals return home the same day.

"Cornell's donors live happy, healthy, normal lives in homes with families," said Ro Narbe, owner of Tessa and Dulcie who have been donors for three years. "Sometimes you'll see a dark side of donor programs—when animals are kept in cages so that they are available at any given moment. Cornell's donors are not treated that way. It's why I allow my dogs to participate."

Tessa and Dulcie are both rescued greyhounds. According to Narbe, greyhounds are particularly good donors because they have a universal blood type. Narbe brings them to the Hospital every couple of months to update the blood supply as the shelf life of blood products is only about three months. Donors are thoroughly typed and tested for infectious diseases, and the blood bank includes every possible blood product – from whole blood provided on-the-spot to plasma to packed red blood cells and platelet concentrate.

"Providing this service is key to the Hospital's ability to successfully serve animals in critical condition," said Dr. Nishi Dhupa, director of professional services at CUHA. "Many of our patients are in life-threatening situations and time is not on their side."



[Alumni News](#) > Ashley Shelton

## April 2009

### Features

- [College News: Satellite Teaching Facility](#)
- [College News: Blood Bank](#)
- [Young Alum Profile: Ashley Shelton](#)
- [Research: Leela Noronha](#)
- [Student Activities: Pedal for Pets](#)

### Development

- [Charitable Giving](#)

### In Brief

- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Veterinary Alumni Association](#)
- [Class Notes Submissions](#)

### [Recent Issue](#)

### Archives

- [November 2015](#)
- [August 2015](#)
- [April 2015](#)
- [January 2015](#)
- [November 2014](#)
- [August 2014](#)
- [April 2014](#)
- [January 2014](#)
- [November 2013](#)
- [August 2013](#)
- [April 2013](#)
- [January 2013](#)
- [November 2012](#)
- [August 2012](#)
- [November 2011](#)
- [August 2011](#)
- [April 2011](#)
- [August 2010](#)
- [April 2010](#)
- [November 2009](#)



- [August 2009](#)
- [April 2009](#)

## CURRENT ISSUE

# To Climb the Hill

When Ashley Shelton DVM '04 began an AVMA Congressional fellowship in 2007, she believed that it would be a one-year stint. In 2008, she fully expected to return to the life of an equine practitioner. That year, though, was transformative, and today, Dr. Shelton is looking forward to a long and productive career in Washington, DC, where she spends much of her day "on the Hill."



"The fellowship was probably the most fun I've had in my professional career," said Dr. Shelton, adding, "but it was also the most eye-opening. It changed my perspective on the government—how it functions and the laws that govern us. I developed a much deeper respect for people who are willing to serve the public."

These people, she says, influence and shape our lives. As an assistant director with the AVMA's Governmental Relations Division (GRD) responsible for advocating for the veterinary profession in areas related to food safety, public health, pharmaceuticals, animal disease programs, and homeland security, she wants to be—and is—part of that effort.

"Here at the GRD, we advocate the Association's policies and positions on federal legislative and regulatory issues that influence animal and human health and advance the veterinary medical profession," said Dr. Shelton. "Advocating is about explaining your perspective and it is also, frequently, about numbers. Members and staff need to know what is important to their constituents, and the more constituents who contact them, the more likely action will be taken. Meetings with members and staff, letters, emails and phone calls are all important in conveying your message. It doesn't take long to participate, and it's in your best interest. I'm looking forward to a lot of engagement from veterinarians."

Currently, Dr. Shelton is engaged in discussions concerning the judicious use of antibiotics in food animals and veterinarians' roles in public health and food safety. It's her job to help elected officials understand the AVMA's policies and positions on these issues.

"My days here are very different than what they were in private practice," said Dr. Shelton. "As a practitioner, I saw patients and had tangible things to show for a day's work. These days, my to-do list is filled with the steps that will help us reach a goal, such as Hill visits, coalition meetings, and conference calls. The actual goals are often long in coming, because, as was pointed out to me upon my initial arrival to DC, the government is not set up to pass as many bills as possible. It is set up to keep bad bills from being passed. My job allows me to be involved with the profession as a whole, and I never realized just how many of these laws affect veterinarians."

Dr. Shelton decided to be a veterinarian in her senior year of high school after an afternoon of horseback riding. More specifically, she decided to become an equine vet after she watched a veterinarian gracefully restore an ailing colt to good health all the while engaged in a conversation with the family.

"We were outside in the sun and fresh air," she said. "And the doctor had such an influence on that family, on the horse, and the people. I had been leaning toward a career in human medicine and had never considered veterinary medicine before that, but on that day, I knew it's what I would do."

After graduating from Cornell, Dr. Shelton completed a one-year internship in equine medicine and surgery at Blue Ridge Equine Clinic and then joined the clinic of the veterinarian who inspired her to pursue the profession in the first place.

"That brought my career full circle," said Dr. Shelton. "My work helped families and animals every day. In this position, I am excited to help those same families and many others, too. I'm helping in different ways, but I hope in ways that are just as important to them and the profession."

If you would like to be part of shaping the profession, visit the Congressional Advocacy Network at [www.avma.org/advocacy/get\\_involved/avmacan.asp](http://www.avma.org/advocacy/get_involved/avmacan.asp).

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[Alumni News](#) > Leela Noronha

## April 2009

### Features

- [College News: Satellite Teaching Facility](#)
- [College News: Blood Bank](#)
- [Young Alum Profile: Ashley Shelton](#)
- [Research: Leela Noronha](#)
- [Student Activities: Pedal for Pets](#)

### Development

- [Charitable Giving](#)

### In Brief

- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Veterinary Alumni Association](#)
- [Class Notes Submissions](#)

### Recent Issue

### Archives

- [November 2015](#)
- [August 2015](#)
- [April 2015](#)
- [January 2015](#)
- [November 2014](#)
- [August 2014](#)
- [April 2014](#)
- [January 2014](#)
- [November 2013](#)
- [August 2013](#)
- [April 2013](#)
- [January 2013](#)
- [November 2012](#)
- [August 2012](#)
- [November 2011](#)
- [August 2011](#)
- [April 2011](#)
- [August 2010](#)
- [April 2010](#)
- [November 2009](#)

- [August 2009](#)
- [April 2009](#)

## CURRENT ISSUE

### **Bridging Passions and Stages, Purposes and Phases: Behind the Scenes with Dr. Leela Noronha**

Dr. Leela Noronha grew up in rural West Virginia and spent a lot of time on her grandparents' farm, and her parents were in the human medical field. Veterinary medicine, it seems, was a natural bridge between the worlds she knew and loved.

But exactly what path in the wide-open field of veterinary medicine was not readily clear. As an undergraduate biochemistry major, Dr. Noronha had the opportunity to do research, and she worked for a period with Pfizer, as a technician conducting cancer research.



"Research has always been appealing," said Dr. Noronha. "I enjoy basic research because it answers questions on so many levels—from the genetic level to the systemic level. I struggled, though, with whether I should continue my research career or pursue my veterinary degree."

Ultimately, Dr. Noronha decided that to be the most effective veterinary researcher, she needed to first solidify her skills and gain a perspective for various animal health and welfare issues and challenges that face pet owners. She graduated from the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine in 2001 and spent four years in mixed animal private practice outside of Washington, DC.

"Being responsible for clinical cases complemented my formal veterinary education and expanded my understanding of medicine in ways that laboratory experience could not," said Dr. Noronha. "I am a better scientist today because of my enhanced appreciation of health and disease. Patient care also furthered my education in the 'bench-to-bedside' process of medical science. Clinical experience provided me with a critical knowledge base from which to pursue my ultimate career goal of being a biomedical scientist participating in translational research programs."

Ready to immerse herself in the challenge and discovery of research, Dr. Noronha came to Cornell in 2005 and enrolled in the graduate program in Immunology. Funded by a training grant for comparative medicine, the program is designed to bridge the valley that often forms between practical medicine and research. Through this program, she completed three rotations, all with equine experts at the College:

- With Dr. Doug Antczak, Dorothy Havemeyer McConville professor of equine medicine, she studied mechanisms of maternal-fetal tolerance, performing ectopic trophoblast transplant surgeries in horses;
- With Dr. Klaus Osterrieder, former Cornell professor of virology, she studied immune evasion by Equine Herpes Virus-1, evaluating expression of major histocompatibility complex (MHC) molecules in virus-infected cells;
- With Dr. Bettina Wagner, assistant professor of immunology, she generated a panel of monoclonal antibodies, performing mouse immunization, hybridoma fusion, and clone evaluation, as well as flow cytometry and cell sorting.

Today, Dr. Noronha works with Dr. Antczak, combining her passion for horses with her desire to conduct research, and explains that she has a particular interest in equine immunology.

"Dr. Antczak's lab offers tremendous resources," said Dr. Noronha, explaining the Dr. Antczak has been an inspiring mentor. "The horse whose DNA was used to sequence the equine genome is here; Dr. Antczak maintains a unique herd of horses that have been specially bred to be homozygous at the major histocompatibility complex (MHC) region of their genome, which enables interesting immunology studies; Don Miller has developed an equine microarray, a very powerful tool to study gene expression; and I have access to reagents that help probe cell activity."

Dr. Noronha is using these tools to study the immunological tolerance of a mother to her fetus. During pregnancy, the mother tolerates – and even nurtures – an organism comprised of her own and foreign genetic material. Dr. Antczak's lab has raised this question: why does the mother not reject this foreign tissue as bodies frequently do with organ transplants?

"With transplants, doctors wait for the perfect genetic match," said Dr. Noronha, adding, "and, still rejection is an issue and the recipient must take immunosuppressant drugs forever. The goal of our research is to gain a detailed understanding of the immunological mechanisms of maternal-fetal tolerance. Such information can lead to applications in fields as diverse as infertility, contraception, transplantation, cancer, and auto-immune diseases."

More specifically, Dr. Noronha's research with Dr. Antczak will help researchers understand how to nurture some foreign materials (like organ transplants) and how to eliminate other foreign bodies (like cancer tumors).

Dr. Noronha's work is funded with a National Research Service Award, granted by the National Institutes for Health. She is one of three women equine researchers at the College of Veterinary Medicine to hold such a prestigious award that is designed to bridge a researcher from mentorship to independence.

"Ultimately, I want to be an academic researcher at a vet school where I can do basic research in partnership with clinicians and the veterinary community," said Dr. Noronha. "Basic research—my research—has the power to help humans and animals. While the application might not be readily apparent at the molecular or experimental level, it is at the root of delivering the life-saving drugs that clinicians need to serve their patients."

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[Alumni News](#) > Pedal for Pets

## April 2009

### Features

- [College News: Satellite Teaching Facility](#)
- [College News: Blood Bank](#)
- [Young Alum Profile: Ashley Shelton](#)
- [Research: Leela Noronha](#)
- [Student Activities: Pedal for Pets](#)

### Development

- [Charitable Giving](#)

### In Brief

- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Veterinary Alumni Association](#)
- [Class Notes Submissions](#)

### Recent Issue

### Archives

- [November 2015](#)
- [August 2015](#)
- [April 2015](#)
- [January 2015](#)
- [November 2014](#)
- [August 2014](#)
- [April 2014](#)
- [January 2014](#)
- [November 2013](#)
- [August 2013](#)
- [April 2013](#)
- [January 2013](#)
- [November 2012](#)
- [August 2012](#)
- [November 2011](#)
- [August 2011](#)
- [April 2011](#)
- [August 2010](#)
- [April 2010](#)
- [November 2009](#)

- [August 2009](#)
- [April 2009](#)

## CURRENT ISSUE

# Pedal for Pets

Dear Alumni,

My name is Jessica Dowling. I am the president of the Student Chapter of the American Veterinary Medical Association (SCAVMA) and would like to invite you to participate in the first annual Pedal for Pets to benefit the Cornell University Hospital for Animals. The event is on May 2, 2009, and is organized by SCAVMA. It features two options for adult riders: a 33-mile route (with only a couple of hills) and a 53-mile route for those who enjoy a challenge. In addition, the students have organized a junior bike-a-thon, so that even the youngest family members can participate. At the junior bike-a-thon, riders will be able to participate in relay races, obstacle courses, interactive games, bike safety, pet information and more. All proceeds will benefit the Cornell University Hospital for Animals. Registration for the ride begins at 9am in the B parking lot on the Cornell University campus. Awards will be presented around 3pm, also in the B parking lot.

On behalf of the students, I am pleased to share that we are proud to rally in support of the Cornell University Hospital for Animals and hope that you will join us. Please support this event by riding, volunteering on the day of, or pledging to support one of the riders. Ithaca is one of the best areas for cycling. We tried to find an event that would combine the area's phenomenal natural landscape with the opportunity to support the compassionate and world-class care offered at the Hospital.

If you have questions, please visit [www.cvmscavma.com](http://www.cvmscavma.com) or email me at [jed32@cornell.edu](mailto:jed32@cornell.edu).

Sincerely,  
Jessica Dowling

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[Alumni News](#) > Charitable Giving

## April 2009

### Features

- [College News: Satellite Teaching Facility](#)
- [College News: Blood Bank](#)
- [Young Alum Profile: Ashley Shelton](#)
- [Research: Leela Noronha](#)
- [Student Activities: Pedal for Pets](#)

### Development

- [Charitable Giving](#)

### In Brief

- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Veterinary Alumni Association](#)
- [Class Notes Submissions](#)

### [Recent Issue](#)

### Archives

- [November 2015](#)
- [August 2015](#)
- [April 2015](#)
- [January 2015](#)
- [November 2014](#)
- [August 2014](#)
- [April 2014](#)
- [January 2014](#)
- [November 2013](#)
- [August 2013](#)
- [April 2013](#)
- [January 2013](#)
- [November 2012](#)
- [August 2012](#)
- [November 2011](#)
- [August 2011](#)
- [April 2011](#)
- [August 2010](#)
- [April 2010](#)
- [November 2009](#)



- [August 2009](#)
- [April 2009](#)

## CURRENT ISSUE

# Charitable Giving

Gifts to the college come in all shapes and sizes and are greatly appreciated. Whether you are running your own veterinary hospital, working part-time for another veterinarian or newly retired, finances are on your mind. Chances are, you've always wanted to give back to the place that helped to make you who you are today, but you may not be sure how to do this in an uncertain economic climate.

Recently, the family of Dr. Leon Z. Saunders PhD '51 contacted us about creating a memorial scholarship. They originally had planned to establish the scholarship through a life insurance policy, but realized that it was more tax advantageous to give through his estate. See [Saunders Scholarship](#) for more about this story.

If you are looking for a way to increase your income, decrease your tax bill, or simply provide for the College of Veterinary Medicine sometime in the future, we encourage you to consider options as powerful as naming the College in your will or as creative as naming Cornell as the or one of the beneficiaries on a life insurance policy you may not be relying upon.

Find out how to give to Cornell tax free through your IRA or increase your cash flow by visiting [www.alumni.cornell.edu/gift\\_planning/goodnews.cfm](http://www.alumni.cornell.edu/gift_planning/goodnews.cfm). We would also be happy to talk with you personally about your specific situation.

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Please report problems with this page to [the webmaster](#).



[Alumni News](#) > Upcoming Events

## April 2009

### Features

- [College News: Satellite Teaching Facility](#)
- [College News: Blood Bank](#)
- [Young Alum Profile: Ashley Shelton](#)
- [Research: Leela Noronha](#)
- [Student Activities: Pedal for Pets](#)

### Development

- [Charitable Giving](#)

### In Brief

- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Veterinary Alumni Association](#)
- [Class Notes Submissions](#)

### Recent Issue

### Archives

- [November 2015](#)
- [August 2015](#)
- [April 2015](#)
- [January 2015](#)
- [November 2014](#)
- [August 2014](#)
- [April 2014](#)
- [January 2014](#)
- [November 2013](#)
- [August 2013](#)
- [April 2013](#)
- [January 2013](#)
- [November 2012](#)
- [August 2012](#)
- [November 2011](#)
- [August 2011](#)
- [April 2011](#)
- [August 2010](#)
- [April 2010](#)
- [November 2009](#)

- [August 2009](#)
- [April 2009](#)

## CURRENT ISSUE

# Upcoming Events

<b>May 2, 2009</b>	<a href="#">Pedal for Pets Bike-A-Thon</a>
<b>May 18, 2009</b>	Honor Day
<b>May 23, 2009</b>	Hooding Ceremony
<b>May 24, 2009</b>	Commencement Ceremony
<b>May 30, 2009</b>	Basic Canine Physical Rehabilitation Workshop
<b>June 4-7, 2009</b>	<a href="#">Alumni Reunion</a>
<b>July 24-26, 2009</b>	21st Annual Fred Scott Feline Symposium
<b>Sept. 18-19, 2009</b>	Equine Advanced Tenoscopy and Bursoscopy Specialty Course
<b>Oct. 1-4, 2009</b>	NYS Veterinary Conference 2009

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Please report problems with this page to [the webmaster](#).





[Alumni News](#) > Vet Alum Assoc

## April 2009

### Features

- [College News: Satellite Teaching Facility](#)
- [College News: Blood Bank](#)
- [Young Alum Profile: Ashley Shelton](#)
- [Research: Leela Noronha](#)
- [Student Activities: Pedal for Pets](#)

### Development

- [Charitable Giving](#)

### In Brief

- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Veterinary Alumni Association](#)
- [Class Notes Submissions](#)

### Recent Issue

### Archives

- [November 2015](#)
- [August 2015](#)
- [April 2015](#)
- [January 2015](#)
- [November 2014](#)
- [August 2014](#)
- [April 2014](#)
- [January 2014](#)
- [November 2013](#)
- [August 2013](#)
- [April 2013](#)
- [January 2013](#)
- [November 2012](#)
- [August 2012](#)
- [November 2011](#)
- [August 2011](#)
- [April 2011](#)
- [August 2010](#)
- [April 2010](#)
- [November 2009](#)

- [August 2009](#)
- [April 2009](#)

## CURRENT ISSUE

# Veterinary Alumni Association

Your Veterinary College Alumni Association exists to encourage support for the College (financial and otherwise) from students and alumni, creating connections that sometimes cross generations. Specifically, we helped sponsor the [White Coat Ceremony](#) in December, the Class of 2010's first step into the profession. Alumna Judy St. Leger DVM '91 spoke to the packed James Law Auditorium crowd.

Last October, the Association honored legendary neurologist Alexander "Sandy" de Lahunta '58, PhD '63 (affectionately known as Dr. D) with the prestigious Daniel Elmer Salmon Award for Distinguished Alumni Service. If you missed the ceremony on campus, [view his talk online](#). Nominations are being taken until May 1 for this year's [Salmon Award](#).

The Association's activities are funded through your dues (yearly at \$25 or lifetime at \$500). We recently sent a letter asking you to consider supporting our work. If you would like to pay your dues via credit card, please call Paula Aiken in the Office of Alumni Affairs and Development at 607-253-3716.

Our board is growing and continues to hear from Dean Kotlikoff about the College's most pressing priorities. Feel free to contact any member of the Board at any time about issues important to you. The names of the Executive Board, our meeting schedule, and the Daniel Elmer Salmon Award nomination forms can be found [here](#).

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[Alumni News](#) > Class Notes

## April 2009

### Features

- [College News: Satellite Teaching Facility](#)
- [College News: Blood Bank](#)
- [Young Alum Profile: Ashley Shelton](#)
- [Research: Leela Noronha](#)
- [Student Activities: Pedal for Pets](#)

### Development

- [Charitable Giving](#)

### In Brief

- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Veterinary Alumni Association](#)
- [Class Notes Submissions](#)

### Recent Issue

### Archives

- [November 2015](#)
- [August 2015](#)
- [April 2015](#)
- [January 2015](#)
- [November 2014](#)
- [August 2014](#)
- [April 2014](#)
- [January 2014](#)
- [November 2013](#)
- [August 2013](#)
- [April 2013](#)
- [January 2013](#)
- [November 2012](#)
- [August 2012](#)
- [November 2011](#)
- [August 2011](#)
- [April 2011](#)
- [August 2010](#)
- [April 2010](#)
- [November 2009](#)



- [August 2009](#)
- [April 2009](#)

## CURRENT ISSUE

# Class Notes Submissions

The next '**Scopes Magazine** will be published in July 2009. Please let us know what you'd like to share with your classmates in our Class Notes section by May 15, 2009, for inclusion in our July issue.

### **Please include:**

- Name (Maiden if appropriate)
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