SUMMER 2021

On Call

A MAGAZINE FOR FRIENDS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

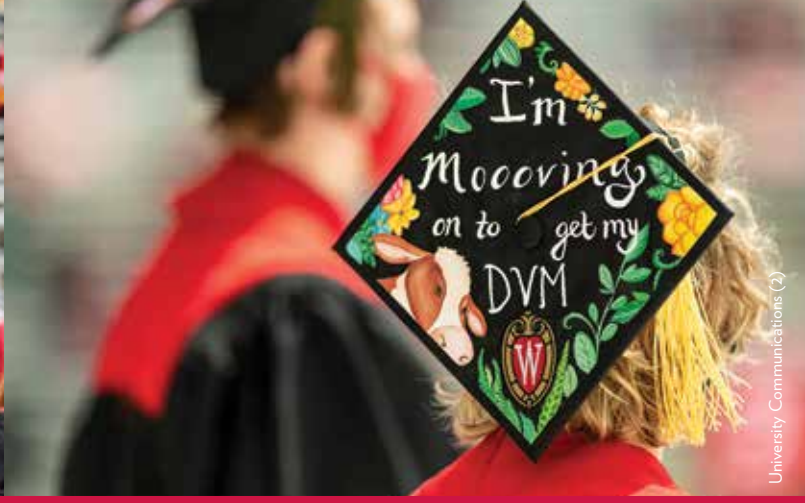
Ready to Serve

Meet UW Veterinary Care's new director

Self-Compassion

Supporting wellbeing in the veterinary profession

School of Veterinary Medicine
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



University Communications (2)

Congratulations Doctors

Welcome to the most amazing profession!

The faculty, staff and alumni of the SVM are truly impressed by the dedication, integrity and professionalism shown by your class as you've worked toward your Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree. Go forward in confidence. You earned it. We are so proud of you!

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School of Veterinary Medicine
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

On Call

SUMMER 2021

Features

Serving Patients by Empowering Practitioners

When Chris Snyder assumed the role of associate dean for clinical affairs and teaching hospital director this June at the UW School of Veterinary Medicine, he came full circle on a journey that began 16 years ago. Thrilled to serve veterinary patients, practitioners, and students in training, he follows more than a decade of leadership from Ruthanne Chun.

Page 10

On the Path to Improved Wellbeing

Amidst the increased stressors of the pandemic, now more than ever the UW School of Veterinary Medicine is redoubling efforts to enhance the wellbeing of students and employees. This work is in tandem with national efforts to cultivate wellbeing in the veterinary medical profession and extend the same compassion to care providers as they deliver to patients.

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In Each Issue

More

On the Cover

Tiny, a two-year-old domestic medium hair cat, visits UW Veterinary Care for a recheck appointment with the Dentistry and Oral Surgery Service. (Photo: Meghan Lepisto/ UW School of Veterinary Medicine)

School of Veterinary Medicine
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Slowly Returning to Normal


BRYCE RICHTER

Mark D. Markel

The University of Wisconsin–Madison and the School of Veterinary Medicine are gradually returning to a version of normalcy. Since June, in most circumstances, we no longer require face coverings in inside or outside spaces, with the critical exception of our hospital, UW Veterinary Care. Due to our inability to maintain physical distancing in the hospital, we will continue to require the wearing of face coverings for the foreseeable future.

The upcoming fall semester certainly looks like it will approach a normal one. We hope to have the overwhelming majority of our instruction in person. Our Class of 2022 began its in-person clinical rotations in May.

The past 16 months have been difficult for us all. But I know much has been learned, particularly on the educational front, that we will be able to carry into the future to enhance the education we provide to our professional and graduate students. One example of this can be found on page 20 of this magazine, related to surgical instruction for our third-year veterinary medical students.

On an exciting note, as this issue of *On Call* goes to print, we have just held the groundbreaking ceremony on June 18 for the school's new building. It's a thrilling time and one that we have been working toward for many years. This expansion will double the size of our small animal hospital and significantly enhance our large animal hospital. It will also elevate and expand our teaching and research spaces, improving the education we provide to our students and the research we conduct that benefits both animal and human health.

I want to thank all of you who have supported this important building project over the years with your advocacy as well as your philanthropy. We would not be where we are today without your support.

With construction beginning this summer, our goal is to complete the new building by the end of 2023. The subsequent remodeling of our current building should be completed by the end of 2024. It will be a challenging time as we navigate construction, but one that will lead to a bright future for the school.

I hope all of you have a fantastic summer as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. As we continue to open up, I hope there will soon be opportunities for you to stop by and visit.

Mark D. Markel, Dean

On Call SUMMER 2021

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Ask a UW Veterinarian

Pet Sitting in a Pandemic

*This expert response comes from **Ruthanne Chun**, clinical professor of oncology at the UW School of Veterinary Medicine.*

Question: It's my understanding that pets can contract COVID-19. If I need someone to watch my pet for a week, what is the safest option? Is it best to board the pet in a facility, such as a veterinary clinic? Or have someone visit my pet in my home while I'm gone? Should that someone be vaccinated, or does that not matter?

Answer: While there are reports of a small number of pet dogs, cats, and ferrets worldwide contracting SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) from close contact with humans who are ill with COVID-19, this has not been identified as a common problem in the past year.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered low based on the information available to date. But it is possible that people positive for COVID-19 can spread the virus to animals, mostly during close contact.

Infected pets might get sick or they might not have any symptoms. Of the pets that have gotten sick, most only had mild illness and fully recovered. Serious illness related to SARS-CoV-2 in pets appears to be extremely rare.

The CDC suggests that people should treat pets like other family members. If you are sick with COVID-19 (either suspected or confirmed by a test), you should avoid contact with your pets and other animals, just like you would with people.

If you choose to travel and need to board your pet, contact the boarding facility and ask about their COVID-19 screening policies for their employees. If you hire a pet sitter to come into your home, hiring someone who is fully vaccinated against COVID-19 is the safest option for you and your pet.

To view more guidance from the CDC regarding COVID-19 and pets, visit **go.wisc.edu/covidpets**.

Questions

Have a question for our veterinary medical experts?

Send it to **oncall@vetmed.wisc.edu**. We cannot guarantee responses to all submissions. For any urgent pet health issue, please contact your veterinarian directly.

Socializing with the SVM

Friends of the school sharing their thoughts (and pets) on social media...

Thanks to our partnership with @uwvetmed all of our animals receive world class healthcare. Today our baby otters passed their first health check with flying colors!

–@HenryVilasZoo
Via SVM Twitter (@uwvetmed)

Our Lucy Goosey has a little dimple now. The vets at @uwvetmed were so great in removing her jaw cancer and taking care of her afterwards. Tough for our 13 year old, but she's still got a lot of water frisbee days ahead. 🐾 Grateful for science, veterinarians and happy endings.

–@carolyn.turningleaf
Via SVM Instagram (@uwvetmed)

HSVMA was proud to support a World Spay Day clinic organized by University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine students and Green County Humane Society. The team was able to sterilize 40 cats and give the students valuable training on anesthesia, surgery, surgical recovery, and cat handling.

–Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (@HSVMA)
Via SVM Facebook (@uwvetmed)

Sen. Baldwin Visits Lab Tracking COVID-19 Variants

In April, Senator Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin visited the AIDS Vaccine Research Laboratory where UW–Madison infectious disease experts have been cataloging subtle genetic differences between hundreds of strains of the virus that causes COVID-19.

Genomic sequencing performed at the lab since March 2020 by a group of scientists, led by Professors **Thomas Friedrich** of the School of Veterinary Medicine and David O'Connor of the School of Medicine and Public Health, has kept watch for the appearance in Southern Wisconsin of concerning viral variants. Their efforts have made Dane County one of the leading places in the U.S. where this kind of surveillance is performed. The work has also revealed important details about the spread of the virus in Wisconsin. Because the research group's surveillance efforts have been fast, they've been used to help inform real-time public health decisions in the community.

"We are lucky to have the infrastructure, built years ago by UW and federal resources, that allowed us to shift so quickly to studying an emerging pandemic," Friedrich told Baldwin. "Sequencing has helped us understand the way COVID-19 has spread in Wisconsin and given us and our partners in state and local health departments the best information possible while they make decisions to help stop further spread."

Baldwin introduced legislation in February to fund an expansion of virus genome sequencing, to make the kind of genomic surveillance the UW–Madison labs and partners around the state are providing to Wisconsin more common across the country. The bill's plan was included in the American Rescue Plan signed into law in March, providing $1.75 billion in new funding for genomic surveillance.

"Tracking new variants is vitally important to our ability to combat this virus and get through the pandemic, and I want to applaud the team at the University of Wisconsin for their incredible work," said Baldwin.

During the tour, the group discussed the importance of expanding sequencing now while also preparing for the next public health emergency by supporting the scientists and trainees who provide vital expertise, and ensuring the supplies and equipment necessary for labs can be available in short order.

Chris Barncard

Fingerprinting a Virus

Researchers at the AIDS Vaccine Research Laboratory, led by **Thomas Friedrich**, a professor of pathobiological sciences in the School of Veterinary Medicine, and David O'Connor, a UW–Madison professor of pathology and laboratory medicine, have performed a high level of genomic sequencing on the virus that causes COVID-19, combing the genetic identities of as much as five percent of all SARS-CoV-2 infections in Dane County. Nationally, scientists have sampled less than two percent of all positive cases.

Genomic sequencing can provide a wealth of information about pathogens and how they spread. The SARS-CoV-2 virus accumulates small changes, or mutations, roughly every other time it transmits from one person to another, leaving genetic fingerprints that researchers can track. Whole genome sequencing is like looking at the fingerprint of the virus affecting each person, explains graduate student and lab member Gage Moreno.

"You can use those fingerprints to track down where (the individual virus) came from, and where it's going and how long it's circulated there," he says.

Kelly April Tyrrell

JEFF MILLER / UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

Senator Tammy Baldwin listens to a presentation by graduate student Gage Moreno during a tour of the AIDS Vaccine Research Laboratory. Baldwin visited the lab in April to learn more about the team's efforts to study the virus that causes COVID-19, including genomic sequencing of variants of concern and research to better understand transmission of the virus.

When Polar Bears Are Your Patients

Berit is relaxed and enjoys snacking on romaine lettuce. **Bo** is rambunctious and would rather eat lard.

The pair of polar bears, age 22 and 2, respectively, reside at Dane County's Henry Vilas Zoo. The two love to snuggle and tally a combined weight of nearly 1,400 pounds. They've been together since January after Bo, short for Borealis, arrived from the Toledo Zoo.

"I am so lucky to get to work with such wonderful polar bears," says **Mary Thurber DVM'14**, the primary veterinarian at Henry Vilas Zoo. Thurber is a clinical instructor of zoological medicine at the UW School of Veterinary Medicine (SVM) and a board-certified diplomate of the American College of Zoological Medicine.

Since spring 2019, the SVM and its teaching hospital, UW Veterinary Care, have served as Henry Vilas Zoo's contracted veterinary service. Thurber and other zoological medicine clinicians and trainees visit the zoo three days each week, in addition to providing on-call coverage. They work collaboratively with veterinary technicians at the zoo, animal keepers, and zoo management to provide the highest possible level of animal care.

A variety of UW Veterinary Care specialty services also lend their expertise. And for the first time, this spring, the school began offering a zoological medicine clinical rotation for fourth-year veterinary medicine students that includes visits to the zoo.

"It's a huge team effort," says Thurber.

Day to day, the team's work ranges from examining animals to giving vaccinations or testing for internal parasites to conducting surgery. Dedicated training from zookeepers aids these procedures.

For staff safety, many zoo animals must be sedated or anesthetized for hands-on medical procedures. But the zoo's polar bears and numerous other animals are trained through positive reinforcement in behaviors that help with medical care. This includes standing up, laying down, sitting, presenting a hip or shoulder, and more. (Staff always work with the polar bears through protected contact, meaning there is a barrier between people and the bears.)

KRISTIN MYERS/HENRY VILAS ZOO

The Henry Vilas Zoo's two polar bears, Berit and Bo, together in the award-winning Arctic Passage exhibit.

"Our polar bears are very cooperative for injections, so they'll voluntarily come over for a vaccine injection," explains Thurber. "They'll open their mouth to show us their teeth, and they're trained to show us different parts of their body so we can do a lot of our veterinary assessment when they're awake."

Berit has also been trained to place her paw in a specially designed chute in the polar bear enclosure, allowing staff to draw blood from the top of her foot while receiving a treat. Occasional blood draws help measure organ function and other key health parameters. Bo is also being trained in this behavior.

"Bo trains mostly for his lard, and Berit likes to train for honey water and romaine lettuce," notes Kristin Myers, one of the zoo's polar bear keepers.

For Thurber, it's an honor to help care for such an iconic species, whose conservation status is vulnerable due to decreasing habitat and populations in the wild.

"With climate change, it's easy to envision melting ice and losing polar bears, which would be so devastating," she says. "Having the ability to care for the species under managed care is such a gift. They're a great ambassador for the general public and to help inspire the next generation."

Thurber notes the role of zoos in contributing to the conservation of polar bears and other species. For example, studies of the diet, metabolism, and other characteristics of animals in captivity help provide a better understanding of animals' needs in their wild habitats. And Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plans, which oversee the population management of many endangered species within AZA institutions, enhance conservation.

"Truly every day, we are working to commit and contribute to conservation," Thurber says.

Meghan Lepisto

Veterinary Clinic for Homeless Pet Owners Meets Growing Demand

The Wisconsin Companion Animal Resources, Education, and Social Services (WisCARES) clinic has been experiencing an influx of new clientele over the past year as a result of financial hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A partnership between the UW schools of veterinary medicine, social work, and pharmacy, WisCARES provides veterinary medical care and social services to those in Dane County who are low-income or experiencing homelessness. Since its founding in 2014, it has grown into a full-fledged veterinary practice and can provide anything from vaccines to chronic disease management and surgeries. It also offers a pet food and supply pantry, animal foster care assistance, and boarding to qualifying clients.

"The combination of the veterinary clinic along with the social services aspects are what makes WisCARES really unique," says **Elizabeth Alvarez**, clinical assistant professor with the School of Veterinary Medicine and curriculum director for WisCARES.

According to the Pew Research Center, 25 percent of adults in the United States have lost a job due to the coronavirus pandemic, and individuals with lower income have been the most affected by job loss or pay cuts because of COVID-19.

"We are finding that especially in the last six to nine months, we have seen an increase in our number of clients, many of whom may not have needed a service like WisCARES prior to COVID," Alvarez said in March.

The WisCARES team is committed to keeping families intact, building trusting relationships with clients, and providing resources and services to those in need, regardless of the financial situation facing the pet owner.

"For many homeless folks, companion animals are pathways to feeling love, finding joy, staying hopeful, nurturing purpose, and enhance the overall will to keep living," a recent WisCARES client said. "I'm disabled and I'm well aware that my cat, as my medical assistance animal, makes my life possible."

MEGHAN LEPISTO

The pet food and supply pantry at Wisconsin Companion Animal Resources, Education, and Social Services (WisCARES) helps fill a void for low-income or homeless pet owners in Dane County.

"For many homeless folks, companion animals are pathways to feeling love, finding joy, staying hopeful, nurturing purpose, and enhance the overall will to keep living."

WISCARES

These feline friends are recent WisCARES patients. The clinic has seen an influx of new clients due to financial hardship caused by COVID-19.

WisCARES relies on financial contributions, pet supply donations, and foster families to extend their services to as many Dane County residents as possible. To learn more about supporting their mission, visit **wiscares.wisc.edu**.

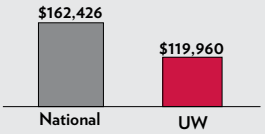
Maddie Arthur

Addressing Educational Debt

Graduates of the UW School of Veterinary Medicine have a lot to be proud of — and their financial achievements are just one such factor. When compared to the other 32 veterinary medical schools in the nation, UW–Madison graduates have the fifth lowest median debt and fifth lowest debt-to-income ratio. Below, view more details about our students and graduates from the latest available data.

0.13%
annual increase in educational debt from 2006-18, the lowest of all DVMs nationally

Average DVM Student Debt Load at Graduation



100% of scholarship applicants recieved aid in 2019

$2M in financial aid was awarded for the 2019-20 school year

The SVM is committed to addressing student debt and the financial health of the profession. This includes providing our students with generous financial aid awards to promote a diverse and successful graduating class and focused financial training at key points in their education. We continue to incorporate new opportunities to help students and graduates flourish.

MADDIE ARTHUR

Source: American Veterinary Medical Association, American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges

Kibble

Bits of news from around the school

Disrupted pathway: New research led by **Michael Cahill**, a professor of neuroscience, found for the first time that disruptions to a particular protein called Akt can lead to brain changes characteristic of bipolar disorder. The results offer a foundation for research into treating the cognitive impairments of bipolar disorder and add to a growing understanding of how the biochemistry of the brain affects health and disease.

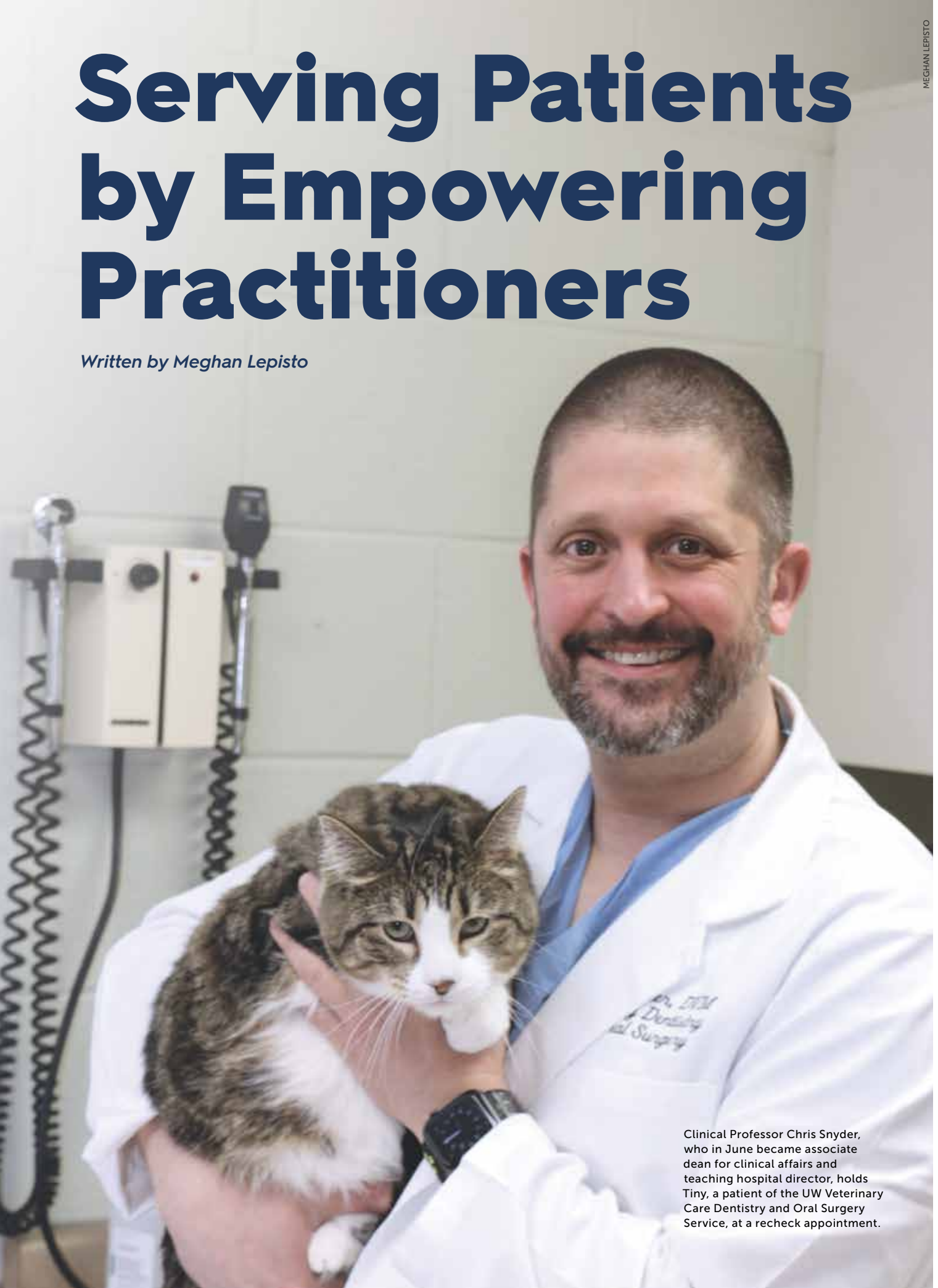
Returning sight: Graduate student **Allison Ludwig** is co-first author of work that may provide hope for those with vision loss. The cross-disciplinary research team made new photoreceptors from human pluripotent stem cells, then developed a micro-molded scaffolding photoreceptor "patch." The patch is meant to precisely deliver and hold in place the photoreceptors within the diseased or damaged eye so they can form appropriate connections.

Potential connection: A new study led by **Erin Lashnits**, a clinical assistant professor of small animal internal medicine, shows evidence of *Bartonella* infection in the blood of people with schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder. *Bartonella* are bacteria historically associated with cat-scratch disease. The study was, by design, not able to demonstrate a causal link; the researchers plan to proceed with a larger study to see whether the preliminary results are borne out.

Invasive fish virus: Tony Goldberg, a professor of epidemiology, is part of a team to reveal a more detailed picture of the range of viral hemorrhagic septicemia virus in Wisconsin. The findings show this deadly fish virus can be found further inland and in more bodies of water than previously known — more reason for watergoers to keep taking preventative steps against its spread.

Serving Patients by Empowering Practitioners

Written by Meghan Lepisto



MEGHAN LEPISTO

Clinical Professor Chris Snyder, who in June became associate dean for clinical affairs and teaching hospital director, holds Tiny, a patient of the UW Veterinary Care Dentistry and Oral Surgery Service, at a recheck appointment.

When Chris Snyder assumed the role of associate dean for clinical affairs and teaching hospital director this June at the UW School of Veterinary Medicine (SVM), he came full circle on a journey that began 16 years ago.

Snyder joined UW Veterinary Care in 2005 for residency training in veterinary dentistry and oral surgery. His residency mentor was veterinary dentist **Bill Gengler**, who at the time held the associate dean role that Snyder now fills. Today, Snyder is even more convinced of something he believed then: educators can have an immense impact on veterinary patients and practitioners.

"The ability to positively impact patients' lives by empowering others is more far-reaching than anything I could provide to a patient on my own," he says.

A clinical professor in Dentistry and Oral Surgery at the SVM, Snyder is also heavily involved with educational development for the American Veterinary Dental College and AO North America, a network of specialized surgeons.

Below, Snyder shares more about his background and vision for serving those within and beyond the school.

On Call: What brought you to veterinary medicine initially and dentistry specifically?

Snyder: Both of my parents were in medicine. I started to volunteer in a small animal clinic when I was in college and gravitated toward the aspects of veterinary medicine where you had the instant gratification of getting in there, working through a problem, and fixing it right away.

Even in college, if you could cut me loose to clean teeth all day long, I was happy because you took something that looked pretty crummy to start and looked great when you were done. Opportunities like that are why dentistry was a natural fit for me.

What do you enjoy about working within a teaching hospital?

I take the education that I've worked hard for very seriously as far as how it can impact patient health, the human-animal bond, and the quality of life for each pet and their overall relationship with their family.

I've also enjoyed working with the students and have latched on to the notion that you can help more patients by being a good teacher. I recognize that I can touch so many more patient and family lives by teaching students than I can by practicing on my own.

What are you looking forward to with this new role?

What most excites me is the opportunity to work with faculty and staff to figure out what they enjoy most, how they get the most satisfaction out of working with the patients they interact with on a routine basis, and what I can do to help make that experience better, more efficient, or help them see more of those types of cases. At the end of the day, even if I didn't necessarily interact with patients on a one-on-one basis, I can feel good that I did touch patients' and families' lives by working through others. It's that empowerment piece.

"I've latched on to the notion that you can help more patients by being a good teacher."
–Chris Snyder

Large photo: Snyder, left, discusses a dental procedure for a UW Veterinary Care canine patient with Brittney Rigby, a dentistry and oral surgery resident.

Inset photo: Snyder examines the mouth of a tiger at Henry Vilas Zoo, where UW Veterinary Care serves as the contracted veterinary service.

MEGHAN LEPISTO (LEFT), HENRY VILAS ZOO (RIGHT)

UW Veterinary Care Patient Visits at a Glance (2019-20)

Dog – 18,779
Cat – 4,114
Other* – 1,057
Horse – 948
Bird – 589
Rabbit – 531
Bovine – 175

*Includes rodents, reptiles, swine, ferrets and other mustelids, camelids such as llamas and alpacas, hedgehogs and other insectivores, sheep, goats, marsupials, primates, fish, amphibians, and other patients.

Hospital Fast Facts

- UW Veterinary Care handled more than **26,000 total patient visits** in fiscal year 2019 (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020).
- Built to see 12,000 patients annually, the hospital is now accommodating more than twice that.
- Originally constructed to facilitate 10 specialties, UW Veterinary Care now offers more than **20 specialty services**, including oncology, surgery, internal medicine, emergency medicine, and exotic species.
- Specialists provide guidance to the state's veterinarians and farmers in areas of expertise ranging from anesthesia to food animal production to zoological medicine.
- New and expanded hospital facilities (part of the UW School of Veterinary Medicine building project, on which construction has now begun) will reduce space shortages, improve client access to clinical expertise, and reduce wait times for high-demand specialty services amid growing demand.
- The building expansion will more than double the size of the small animal hospital and significantly improve the large animal hospital. Enhancements include species-specific waiting areas, a much-needed covered arena for year-round equine lameness and neurological exams, and space to fit the diagnostic equipment that today's cases demand.

What are some of your initial goals?

The ultimate goal is to make sure students have an experience in the clinic that makes them proficient and capable of practicing as a veterinarian when they graduate, so I'll preserve and try to help grow that experience.

Another big piece is helping arm our faculty and staff with the tools to communicate and teach, which is an evolving, growing process. I see the teaching hospital as a living being in itself, so to speak. You have to check in, watch the vital parameters, and feed it in those areas where growth can occur.

For our hospital clients and patients, I think a patient visit is a success when that animal's owner or family is made to feel like their animal was the most important patient in the hospital that day. From the first interaction with hospital phone staff, through meeting the medical team and extending to discharge, top-notch, team-oriented patient care is our goal. No matter how well we think we provide that, we should always look for ways to improve. That's another critical priority.

Is there anything about the teaching hospital that you think the public might not be aware of?

Everything that happens in the hospital is very team-oriented and there's always a group involved in patient care and medical decision-making. Depending on the procedure, we might bring different specialty minds together.

Sometimes, for our referring veterinarians and clients, I think that team idea can be difficult or foreign because you want to gravitate toward one person and have that familiarity. But it's a tremendous resource when you bring together so many people who are frequently on the cutting edge of development and investigation. That's what's distinct about the UW and what we have to offer.

What do you enjoy outside of work?

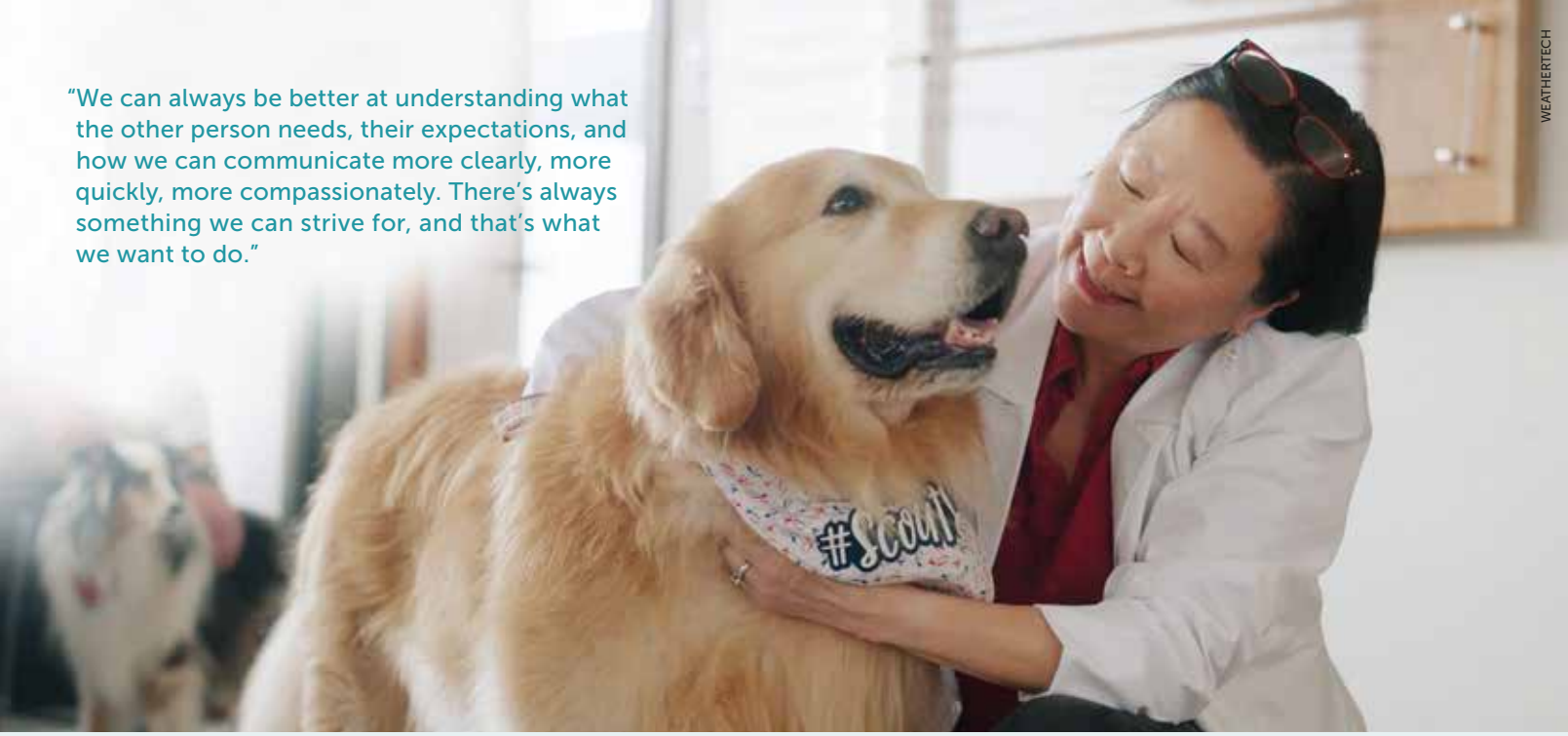
Being a dual veterinarian couple [Snyder's wife, Lindsey, is a clinical instructor in anesthesia and pain management with the SVM], we certainly have an overabundance of animals. We've got a little bit of everything at home — two dogs, two parrots, two cockatiels, two leopard geckos, one snake, a southern flying squirrel, and a hermit crab.

I enjoy the time I've spent coaching my kids (ages 10 and 12) in ice hockey and enjoy photography and woodworking.


NIK HAWKINS

Officer Eric Disch and police dog Jagger of the Madison Police Department visit with Snyder at UW Veterinary Care in 2015.

"We can always be better at understanding what the other person needs, their expectations, and how we can communicate more clearly, more quickly, more compassionately. There's always something we can strive for, and that's what we want to do."



WEATHERTECH

Chun embraces the late golden retriever Scout during the filming of WeatherTech's 2020 Super Bowl commercial at UW Veterinary Care.

Reflecting on a Decade at the Helm

Ruthanne Chun DVM'91

Over more than a decade in the role of associate dean for clinical affairs, **Ruthanne Chun DVM'91** launched new initiatives, expanded UW Veterinary Care's reach and capacity, and confronted the unforeseen.

From the outset in 2010, Chun spurred efforts to raise awareness of the hospital and reinforce its positive reputation on campus, in Wisconsin, and beyond. "One of the first things I did was to try to solidify our image, both internally and externally, letting folks know who we are, why we exist, and what we do under the umbrella of the School of Veterinary Medicine," she recalls.

Under Chun's tenure, several new programs came to fruition focused on public service and access to care. These range from a statewide effort to provide credited and discounted services at UW Veterinary Care for police dogs across Wisconsin to the Wisconsin Companion Animal Resources, Education, and Social Services (WisCARES) clinic, which provides veterinary medical care, housing support and advocacy, and other services to Dane County pet owners who are low-income, or experiencing or at risk of homelessness or housing insecurity (see page 8).

"You can't find somebody more passionate, compassionate, and empathetic than Ruthanne," says School of Veterinary Medicine Dean **Mark Markel**. "I've valued her leadership tremendously."

Chun also oversaw a range of hospital expansion and remodeling efforts — repurposing janitor closets, locker rooms, and every possible square foot — to bolster clinical services. And she strengthened opportunities for interprofessional education and collaboration across the university's health sciences schools.

Most recently, Chun guided the hospital through the COVID-19 pandemic. From March 2020 onward, she helped faculty and staff navigate the stress and strain of rapidly changing protocols and procedures, inspiring them to persevere for students, patients, clients, and referring veterinarians.

"One of the things I've recognized as both hospital director and throughout this entire COVID period is that change is constant," she notes. "Change happens, then more change needs to happen, and it is this never-ending cycle."

"That's how I view our work with external constituents, too — it can always be better," she adds. "We can always be better at understanding what the other person needs, their expectations, and how we can communicate more clearly, quickly, or compassionately. There's always something we can strive for, and that's what we want to do."

In recognition of her many contributions across campus and statewide, in June, Chun was honored with UW-Madison's LaMarr Billups Community–University Engagement Award.

Chun will return to her role on the school faculty as a clinical professor of oncology. A board-certified veterinary oncologist and current president for the subspecialty of Oncology within the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine, she is passionate about the teaching and practice of clinical oncology. She also teaches communication and empathy skills within the veterinary medical curriculum.

Reflecting on her time as hospital director, she is struck by her colleagues' steadfast commitment.

"We have amazing people who work for us who are so incredibly dedicated," she says. "We're in this because we care about animals, and we want to help them and their people. And we're incredibly proud to be a teaching facility."

Toward a Culture


UNSPLASH: LEO HOHO

Veterinarians are overextended today in an already high-intensity profession. Amidst the pandemic, worker shortages at veterinary clinics have collided with a surge in new pet adoptions to create a double whammy of overwhelm. The result: packed schedules, high stress, and exhaustion.

This toll has been felt at the UW School of Veterinary Medicine (SVM) teaching hospital and across the state and nation — amplified by the pandemic's already wide-ranging mental health impacts.

"The pandemic brought to the forefront an issue that has been there all along, but has lacked appropriate attention: The considerable, intense emotional labor of this job," says **Michele Gaspar DVM'94**, a board-certified feline veterinarian and licensed professional counselor. "It's fair to say that few have thrived and many colleagues have been pushed to their limits. Certainly, for healthcare practitioners, whether in veterinary or human medicine, the pace was especially grueling."

Wellbeing in veterinary medicine has been a concern and priority over the past several years for the SVM and profession more broadly. But the need to increase these efforts is apparent.

"Coming out of the pandemic, now more than ever we are being intentional and deliberate about addressing wellbeing as critical," says School of Veterinary Medicine Dean **Mark Markel**. "We are doing careful work to determine the best way to proceed meaningfully."

The school has convened a wellbeing task force to assess current efforts, identify gaps and opportunities, and direct change. School representatives from hospital, curriculum, research, and human resources perspectives will hold listening sessions with students and employees over the next few months.

The group is approaching this work through a wide lens that encompasses career, financial, physical, mental, social, individual, and community wellbeing for all members of the school. Their efforts build on the school's existing student wellness and mental health supports, including individual sessions with three counselors in the Personal and Wellness Support Services office.

"This is beyond an individual person having a good, healthy life. It is also about the intersection between that person and the bigger picture in which we all live, learn, and work," says Associate Dean for Student Academic Affairs and task force chair **Lynn Maki**.

Individual and Institutional

The task force is conducting their work in collaboration with **Makenzie Peterson**, who joined the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges in spring 2020 as the organization's first director for wellbeing. Peterson works collaboratively with veterinary medical schools and colleges across the globe to develop and implement programs that promote wellbeing.

She advocates for a preventative, community-based approach that examines the environments, systems, and policies that may be unintentionally causing distress in the "rigorously longstanding stressful environments" of veterinary medicine.

# of Wellbeing

Written by Meghan Lepisto

She seeks to integrate evidence-based wellbeing efforts into institutional culture with resources to effect personal change.

Similar efforts are underway through the American Veterinary Medical Association and other organizations. The scope of this work, including at the School of Veterinary Medicine, encompasses everything from limiting financial distress and providing financial counseling resources to help individuals navigate debt load, loan repayment options, and financial management to incorporating accommodations and inclusion related to mental health and learning disabilities, and moving toward a competency-based curriculum that integrates wellbeing principles and holistic assessment, as just a few examples.

The veterinary medical community has increasingly focused on wellbeing following growing recognition that the profession carries a risk of suicide that is higher than the general population and experiences other job-related stresses and hazards, such as compassion fatigue, burnout, anxiety, and depression.

Gaspar says this shift in awareness has brought about "really necessary conversations." She's gratified by the desire to dig deeper past interventions aimed at symptoms and also treat the root of underlying causes. To move the needle, she says, "we must understand the 'why.' I see a greater openness to discussing these challenges and that makes for a healthier profession. We're at a point where things aren't being swept under the rug."

In March, the UW School of Veterinary Medicine tragically lost a member of the Emergency and Critical Care faculty, **Joshua Smith**, to suicide. Smith's death reiterated to the school and larger veterinary medical community the importance of promoting mental health, wellbeing, and preventive approaches.

"As in many health professions, death by suicide is something that can happen in our communities," says Peterson. "There are risk factors, but we also know there are protective factors, or things that help people." (Multiple risk factors and protective factors interact dynamically over time to affect a person's risk for suicide. Mental health professionals can support communities in learning how to notice warning signs and identifying appropriate supports. The best way to prevent suicide is through early detection, diagnosis, and vigorous treatment of depression and other mental health conditions.)

Shared Concerns

Both Gaspar and Peterson coordinate across the health professions to develop collaborative approaches to common challenges and stressors. Through her private psychotherapy practice, Gaspar sees a mix of physicians, veterinarians, and other practitioners, helping them navigate professional challenges.

One often-universal concern for Gaspar's clients is perfectionism and corresponding feelings of shame. But while this is a common thread, she has seen a distinction in the human medical field. As part of her counseling training, Gaspar worked at two human hospitals in Chicago, where she says people in power were not afraid to share their histories with self-doubt and mistakes. "There was an overriding understanding that they are not expected to know it all, that they are human, and that mistakes are made. That triad reduces the shame."

Better modeling of healthy self-expectations and imperfection is just one example of "what the next generation entering the veterinary profession needs to hear," she says. "Shame is a huge component of much of the suffering I see in veterinary colleagues. We are compassionate to others, but often less so with ourselves." Ultimately, it comes down to "trying to do the best for our patients, as time and resources allow, and also trying to do the best for ourselves."

Peterson, too, would like to shift perceptions of what a "good veterinarian" is or isn't, and move past ingrained beliefs or stigmas. "Unfortunately, I think the profession has historically viewed good veterinarians as people who never ask for help, never complain, and who take what they're given and smile about it. When really a good veterinarian advocates for others, sets boundaries, and is professionally compassionate," she says. "I think most veterinarians want that and are that, but they're not being provided the space and ability to be their best selves."

Peterson finds hope in leadership embracing change.

"The more we talk about wanting people to bring their authentic selves to work and telling people they belong in our community, we need to put our policies where our mouth is," she says. "I'm hopeful. There are many colleges of veterinary medicine and many clinics and practices saying, yes, there's a professional culture evolution that needs to happen."

Wellbeing Resources

- American Veterinary Medical Association **avma.org/wellbeing**
- American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges **aavmc.org/programs/wellbeing**
- Veterinary Professional Assistance Program **go.wisc.edu/VPAP**
- Veterinary Information Network Foundation Vets4Vets **vinfoundation.org/vets4vets**
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention **afsp.org**

Graduate student Leah Owens and Tacugama general manager Andrea Pizzaro sample a water reservoir at the chimpanzee sanctuary to search for signs of disease-causing bacteria.

COURTESY TONY GOLDBERG (4)

Mystery Disease at Chimpanzee Sanctuary Linked to Bacterial Infection

In 2005, chimpanzees at the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary in Freetown, Sierra Leone, started getting sick. They would stumble, vomit, and stop eating.

The illness came on quickly; some chimps were found dead before caretakers even knew they were sick. Searches for parasites, toxic plants, or viruses responsible for the disease came up empty. Treatment couldn't stave off death. Since then, 56 chimpanzees at the sanctuary have died of the mysterious illness, which has been dubbed epizootic neurologic and gastroenteric syndrome, or ENGS.

But a new study published in *Nature Communications* by researchers from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Tacugama, and an international team of colleagues reveals that an overlooked bacterial group known as *Sarcina* is linked to the syndrome. Researchers found that most chimps sick with ENGS had *Sarcina* in their gut, and some harbored the bacteria in their livers, spleens, and brains. The bacteria did not appear in any healthy chimpanzees.

The findings are helpful guidance for individuals treating sick chimpanzees at Tacugama, part of the Pan African Sanctuary Alliance, which supported the research because the results could aid other chimpanzee sanctuaries.

The study also suggests that *Sarcina*, which has only rarely been linked to disease in humans, may be more common, and capable of more serious infections in people and animals, than previously thought. Yet there is little concern over animal-to-human transmission, and for now the disease remains rare in humans.

"We may have identified an overlooked cause of human and animal disease," says **Tony Goldberg**, a professor of epidemiology in the UW School of Veterinary Medicine who led the research. "This may be a group of species, some of which are perfectly normal soil bacteria, and some of which are deadly pathogens."

ENGS shows varied symptoms in chimps, suggesting that both their digestive and neurological systems are damaged. After years of struggling to pinpoint the cause, veterinarians at Tacugama reached out to Goldberg, who studies emerging diseases and uncovers novel pathogens using genetic sequencing. Thanks to years of detailed veterinary work, Tacugama had tissue samples from both sick and healthy chimps they could share with Goldberg's lab to search for pathogens.

Leah Owens, a dual degree DVM/PhD student with the UW School of Veterinary Medicine, looks for signs of disease-causing bacteria in samples from the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary.

Once the samples were in Madison, Goldberg lab members used genetic sequencing techniques to look for known and unknown viruses, bacteria, and parasites. Just one group of bacteria emerged in tissues from sick chimpanzees — those from the Clostridiaceae family, which are linked to tetanus, botulism, and other diseases.

Graduate student **Leah Owens** of the Comparative Biomedical Sciences program and other scientists involved in the study were able to detect the bacterium in the organs of ill chimps — but not healthy ones. They were even able to see it in the brain of one chimp named Joko who had succumbed to the disease. In a pivotal

Chimpanzees in an enclosure at the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Several dozen chimpanzees at Tacugama have succumbed to a mysterious disease linked to a bacterial infection.

UW School of Veterinary Medicine professor Tony Goldberg samples water at the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary to search for evidence of disease-causing bacteria.

moment, Owens was able to see the telltale four-leaf-clover shape of the bacteria she knew from genetic analysis must have been in the tissue samples: *Sarcina*.

"We were still unsure what this bacterium was doing in the chimps, but we were very sure that it should not have been in the brain," says Goldberg.

In late 2019, Goldberg and Owens traveled to Tacugama. They searched for sources of the mystery pathogen by collecting samples of soil, water, and food.

From those environmental samples, Owens was able to detect the bacterium using specific tests that she and Goldberg had designed back in Wisconsin. Owens was also able to grow the *Sarcina* bacterium in the lab. She succeeded in producing enough of it that study co-authors at the Naval Medical Research Center in Maryland were able to sequence the bacteria's genome.

"Within that genome we found several different biochemical pathways that are associated with pathogenicity," says Owens, first author of the study.

The genome also revealed that the new bacteria, despite resembling other *Sarcina* microbes, was a new species. The researchers named the new species *Sarcina troglodytae* after the scientific name for chimpanzees, Pan troglodytes.

Owens, who has pored over every report of *Sarcina* infection ever reported in humans and animals, says that identifying the species as pathogenic may help clinicians spot more cases of infection going forward. Yet it remains unclear how common *Sarcina* infection is in people, or how serious the infection might typically be.

In recent years, fewer chimpanzees at Tacugama have succumbed to ENGS. Veterinarians at the sanctuary have learned to identify sick animals sooner and developed treatments inspired by the identification of *Sarcina* as a contributing cause of the disease.

Eric Hamilton

From the CBMS Director

Looking Back and Ahead

Wow, has it been seven years already since I assumed directorship of the Comparative Biomedical Sciences (CBMS) graduate program? It has been my honor, privilege, and pleasure to lead this storied graduate program, which has a sustained and enviable record of providing outstanding training to biomedical scientists for over 100 years.

It is gratifying that the CBMS program has grown into a truly multidisciplinary and vibrant, nationally ranked top-five program. We have more than 100 trainers with significant strengths in several specialty areas, including infectious disease, developmental biology, neuroscience, vector biology, regenerative medicine, and cancer research.

I have immensely enjoyed interacting with an outstanding group of graduate students, trainers, and members of the CBMS academic committee, as well as the talented and dedicated program coordinators **Kathy Holtgraver** and **Susan Thideman**.

This spring, I stepped down as CBMS director. I have assumed the directorship of a National Institutes of Health-funded program to train veterinarians in biomedical research and, in September, will become the school's next associate dean for research and graduate training.

I am delighted to announce that **Lyric Bartholomay PhD'04**, a professor in pathobiological sciences at the School of Veterinary Medicine who also co-leads the Midwest Center of Excellence for Vector-Borne Disease, is the new CBMS director — and an alumna of the program. I expect the program to become even more diverse and reach new heights under her dynamic and insightful leadership in the coming years. On Wisconsin!

M. Suresh
John E. Butler Professor, Department of Pathobiological Sciences
Immediate past director, Comparative Biomedical Sciences Program

Classmates Band Together to Support Students of Today and Tomorrow

Bradley Poff DVM'87 couldn't be more excited. After approaching UW School of Veterinary Medicine (SVM) administration in early January about creating a class gift, just a few short months later, he and his peers successfully established the SVM Charter Class of 1987 Scholarship Fund.

Nearly 34 years had passed since graduation when Poff emailed his fellow alumni last winter with an idea for a class scholarship. "We made an impact as a group when we entered the new School of Veterinary Medicine in 1983 and we could come full circle if we could, again, make an impact as a class," he wrote.

For many, it had been decades since they had heard from their classmate. To Poff's surprise and delight, an avalanche of messages, curiosity, and banter followed, with responses ranging from "I'm in!" to "Great idea!" to "Let's do it!"

Poff took the lead in spearheading the effort and worked with the school's Office for Advancement on process details. On their first day of fundraising, alumni contributed $11,000. Within days, the class reached and then exceeded the goal amount needed to endow the scholarship fund.

Yet, even though the fundraising came together quickly, the impetus was years in the making. Since retiring, Poff has had time to proverbially count his blessings. His recollections on his unusual and immensely satisfying career — beginning with his earliest years as a biology grad from UW-Eau Claire, through to the founding days of his medical device company — gave him insight into some of the persistent obstacles to education. His experiences also fueled his desire to rally classmates to help SVM applicants and students, now and for years to come.

Poff attributes his acceptance to and graduation from the School of Veterinary Medicine to a string of small yet significant chance moments and the help of caring people along the way. For example, a casual conversation with a neighborhood friend led to his first post-college job. After this friend was accepted into medical school, he offered Poff his old job at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire. Soon, Poff was hired as a hospital orderly and operating room technician, scrubbing in to assist in soft tissue and orthopedic surgery. The experience forever changed his outlook.

Poff as a School of Veterinary Medicine student in the 1980s.

COURTESY BRADLEY POFF (2)

Bradley Poff, left, and SVM classmates at commencement in 1987.

"We made an impact as a group when we entered the new School of Veterinary Medicine in 1983 and we could come full circle if we could, again, make an impact as a class, for many years to come."

Fast forward a few years and one child later and Poff's can-do attitude and eagerness to learn landed him a role as a project supervisor with the Wisconsin National Primate Research Center in Madison. Two years into that position and with a second child on the way, Poff was asked a life-changing question.

Hideo Uno, then a senior scientist and division head at the center, asked Poff, "What did you want to do when you started school? You can't keep doing this forever." Poff answered that he always wanted to be a veterinarian. To that, Uno suggested Poff contact **Sue Hyland**, as he had heard that she and others were working to establish a veterinary school in Wisconsin.

Poff followed through and had an earnest conversation with Hyland about what it would take to apply for a position in the school's charter class. Uno supported this newfound quest, supplying Poff with a calculator and text-

The UW School of Veterinary Medicine Class of 1987. The class hopes their collective effort to endow the Charter Class of 1987 Scholarship Fund might inspire other alumni to establish their own class scholarship funds.

books for his prerequisite classes. Uno also kept Poff on salary at the primate center with a flexible schedule so he could take classes during the day and focus on lab work in the evenings and on weekends.

Poff's tenacity with coursework led to his acceptance into the newly established UW School of Veterinary Medicine. While hugely gratifying, hurdles still existed.

At age 28 and with a young family, Poff needed to find employment during his four years as a veterinary medical student to earn income and qualify for health insurance. So, he wrote to all the SVM department chairs, asking if he could work in their labs concurrent with attendance. In response, endocrinologist **Mark Brownfield** offered him a research position.

As a DVM student, Poff often thought, "How in the world am I ever going to pay for this?" He took solace in founding Dean **Barney Easterday**'s reassuring words: "You're going to get through the program, both financially and academically, I'm sure."

"Dean Easterday, Sue Hyland, and the core founders group really had the forethought to think of the students," Poff recalls. Through scholarships and employment, Poff graduated with $32,000 in debt — "a good return on investment I think!"

Poff sees this scholarship effort as an opportunity to recognize striving students and the school's legacy of caring. To date, 43 gifts have been received, mostly from Class of 1987 alumni, totaling $43,050 to endow the School of Veterinary Medicine Charter Class of 1987 Scholarship Fund, which will provide student support in perpetuity. If you'd like to make a donation, visit **supportuw.org/giveto/SVM87**.

Denise Garlow

A Message to DVM Alumni

Take Care Of Yourself

As our story on the school's wellbeing efforts (pages 14-15) highlighted, taking care of yourself can mean many different things. I am proud to be affiliated with a profession paying close attention to this topic and providing resources that help us understand the numerous components of wellbeing and how we — as individuals and a school — can promote positive wellbeing.

I don't know about you, but because of the pandemic, I've learned a lot about myself and what supports my wellbeing. Being forced to slow down (or stop) non-work activities, stay home, and interact with people in new ways has given me insights into what is most important personally and helps me stay fulfilled. I've been thinking about what I want my "new normal" to look like and how I can keep in place new habits I formed (like daily walking or running) that greatly improve my mental health. And how I can make things I've really missed (like in-person visits with friends) a priority as activities begin to fill up my calendar again. Importantly, I've learned that good wellbeing shouldn't be accidental — it needs to be deliberate.

For many of you, the pandemic brought significant stress — whether you've been on the public health front lines or responding to the increased demand for veterinary medical services done via curbside. Non-work stresses have been incredibly high as well. Alongside these pressures, I hope you've been able to explore what is essential to your wellbeing and make taking care of yourself a priority.

And I hope the School of Veterinary Medicine can be helpful with your efforts. As we move forward with our wellbeing work, I will look for ways to include alumni in our efforts and the resources we offer. I recognize that in many ways, the work in this area is just beginning and we have much more to do. But I believe that together we can help one another take care of ourselves.

Be well,

Kristi V Thorson

Kristi V. Thorson
Associate Dean for Advancement and Administration

Forced by the Pandemic to Move Online, Students Excel at Virtual Surgical Instruction

Moving a hands-on laboratory course online is no small feat, particularly for surgical skills training. However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, last fall UW School of Veterinary Medicine instructors teaching the surgery lab for third-year veterinary medical students had to get creative in their approach, utilizing a video conferencing platform.

Robert Hardie, clinical professor of small animal general surgery, spearheaded the course's transition to the virtual platform, Blackboard Collaborate, in coordination with fellow surgeons and instructional specialists.

Students learn technical surgery skills such as instrument handling, suturing, and knot tying in this lab. Pre-pandemic, the class of 96 students was split into small groups in one of the school's large teaching lab spaces to practice various skills in person with an instructor.

When COVID-19 caused many classes to go entirely online in fall 2020, the lab moved from workstations to webcams. Rather than practice their surgical abilities face-to-face in the lab, students practiced at home in this rendition of the course. Then they met remotely with an instructor and fellow students via the virtual platform.

The school provided each student with individual surgery kits. In addition, instructional specialists **McLean Gunderson** and **Tina Wahl** worked tirelessly to make teaching models for students and ensure students had the necessary supplies to practice at home.

Groups of 10 to 12 students would meet online to work one-on-one with an instructor and receive direct feedback on their skills. By tilting their laptop or tablet camera down to show their hands, students could demonstrate their surgical technique in real time and receive commentary from their instructor.

"In the remote format, the students actually got more one-on-one, face-to-face contact than they would have in the other environment," Hardie notes. In the traditional in-person labs, the instructors divide their attention between 12-14 students at their station; then, after about 20-30 minutes, the students rotate to another station. "In the end, the amount of direct one-on-one interaction with an instructor was increased remotely, even though the number of lab sessions was approximately the same," he says.

An additional asset of the virtual lab format was that students could hear, watch, and learn from feedback given to other students in their group, which was not easily done in the traditional lab setting.

"Prior to COVID, students would practice in a large circle with ready access to the instructor but not be able to easily see what other students were doing," Hardie explains.

"In the remote format, the students actually got more one-on-one, face-to-face contact than they would have in the other environment. ... The amount of direct one-on-one interaction with an instructor increased."

"Online, the ability to watch your peers practice was very beneficial because students could pick up on the nuances of the skills and learn from others' struggles and successes."

According to Hardie, the biggest challenge for instructors was managing students' expectations and perceptions going into the online learning environment. "The initial impression of many students, I think, was 'how can we possibly learn surgery online?'" he recalls.

As the course got underway, he says, many students took it on as a challenge — their concern for being proficient in surgical skills motivated them to work hard and test their perceptions of remote learning.

In general, student feedback on the remote skills training portion of the course was positive, and the majority of students felt very prepared for their in-person surgical labs. From the faculty's perspective, students performed very well, and in many ways, were more efficient than in previous years.

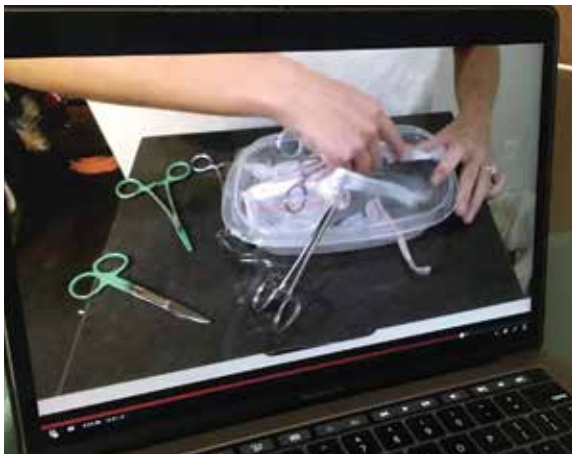
"When we eventually moved to the in-person labs with animals, things went very smoothly and students had very few of the same types of struggles we saw in the past with traditional teaching methods," Hardie notes.

Given the success of the online surgical lab, the teaching team is considering keeping a virtual component of the course in future semesters. Hardie foresees one challenge to this will be managing expectations again but in reverse. "Everyone will be expecting everything to be in-person, assuming that's the gold standard, not realizing the benefits we witnessed this year," he says.

Considering the students' performance when taught online and the advantages of a more collaborative format, the instructors hope to teach parts of the course in a hybrid manner in the fall.

Maddie Arthur

COURTESY ROBERT HARDIE (4)



Top left: Instructional specialists McLean Gunderson and Tina Wahl stand with the handmade surgical spay models they created for students, along with other instruments and supplies provided to each student for remote practice.

Top right: Clinical professor Robert Hardie demonstrates surgical knot tying while a student, seen on the laptop, practices the same suturing skills remotely and receives real-time feedback.

Bottom left: Gunderson and Wahl created surgery kits and surgical teaching models for students to practice with remotely, including this model of the female reproductive tract to rehearse spay surgeries.

Bottom right: This close-up photo of a computer screen shows an instructor's view during one of the virtual training sessions. A student demonstrates their surgical skills using the spay model while receiving live instructor feedback.

Patient Profile

Fantine's Fighting Spirit

When the alpaca **Token's Creek Fantine** struts into the show ring today, you would never know that her life was on the line in infancy.

Born three weeks premature, Fantine weighed 10 pounds at birth — well under the usual weight of 14-20 pounds. Baby alpacas typically stand within an hour following birth and nurse soon after, but Fantine couldn't do either without assistance.

Elden Harms, co-owner of Token Creek Alpacas, knew Fantine needed help. "I tube-fed her through her first evening and decided to bring her and her dam (mother) to the hospital in the morning," he recalls.

Once at UW Veterinary Care's Morrie Waud Large Animal Hospital, blood tests showed Fantine lacked immunoglobulins — critical antibodies passed to a baby through mother's milk. These particular proteins help build a baby's immune system and protect against germs and disease.

Fantine's bloodwork also showed signs of septicemia, a complication of infection that causes inflammation throughout the body.

Clinicians with the Large Animal Internal Medicine Service gave Fantine an intravenous transfusion of frozen llama blood plasma (llamas and alpacas are closely related). This transfusion delivered the immunoglobulins Fantine needed to boost her immunity. She also received antibiotics to fight sepsis and milk replacer every few hours to build her strength.

Fantine spent three days in the hospital. Throughout, her mom, **Token's Creek Tawny**, was with her for support and bonding. As Fantine grew stronger, she began to nurse without assistance. She went from lethargic to active and perky.

Fantine has since thrived on the farm and in competition. In the show ring, alpacas are judged on conformation and fleece quality against others of the same age, color, and gender. Last March, at eight months old, Fantine placed first in her class (juvenile brown female) at the Alpaca Owners Association National Show and earned reserve champion among brown females of all ages.

COURTESY ELDEN HARMS

Above: Elden Harms holds Token's Creek Fantine at the 2020 Alpaca Owners Association National Show, where she earned top prizes. **Inset photo:** Fantine as a days-old baby at UW Veterinary Care.

The Harms are thrilled with Fantine's health and success and pleased to continue their work with UW Veterinary Care and the School of Veterinary Medicine. At their 20-acre farm in Evansville, Wisconsin, Elden and his wife **Ronelle** breed, raise, and sell alpacas, with a current herd size of 17.

Since 2012, Token Creek has hosted veterinary medical students from the school's Small Ruminant Club once or twice each year to gain hands-on experience during herd health days. Students assist with recording the alpacas' weight and other health details, conduct physical exams and other procedures, and then enjoy lunch with the Harms. After a break from visits in 2020 due to COVID-19, they hope to resume hosting students this fall.

"Elden and I want students to feel relaxed and at home here," says Ronelle. "When we stand on our back steps and wave as the students drive away, our hope is the day has been as much of a blessing to them as it's been to us."

Meghan Lepisto

HAPPY AND HEALTHY

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Your gifts also have a direct and positive impact on the educational tools and facilities used to train future veterinarians, ensuring that alumni practicing throughout the state, and nation, will continue to provide exceptional service to all the animals and pets in their care. *All gifts, no matter the size, make a difference.*

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Healing the Healers

Spurred by a lifelong interest in psychology and conversations with veterinary colleagues facing personal and professional tensions, **Michele Gaspar DVM'94** was inspired to shift her career to better understand the stressors facing veterinarians.

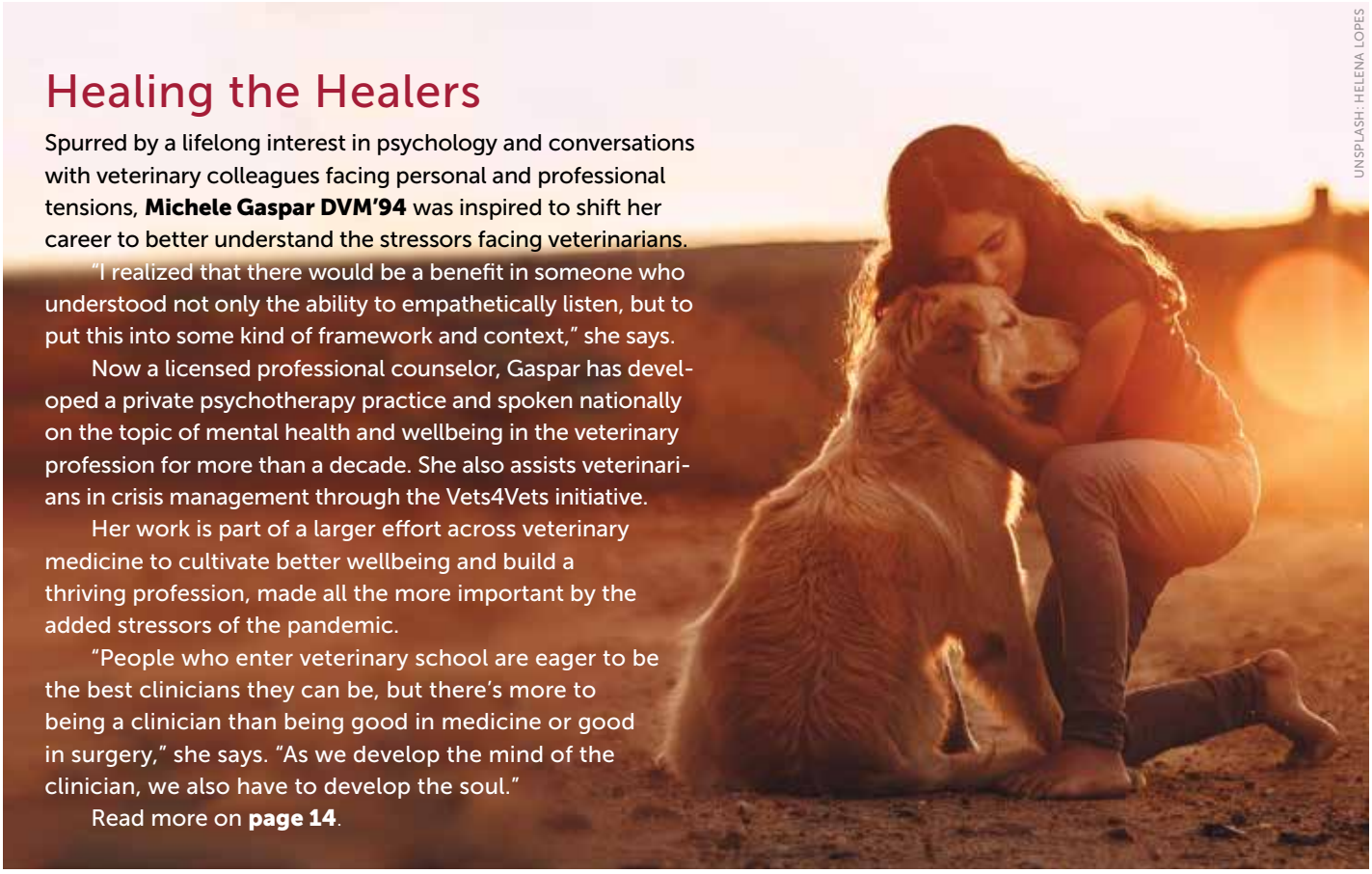
"I realized that there would be a benefit in someone who understood not only the ability to empathetically listen, but to put this into some kind of framework and context," she says.

Now a licensed professional counselor, Gaspar has developed a private psychotherapy practice and spoken nationally on the topic of mental health and wellbeing in the veterinary profession for more than a decade. She also assists veterinarians in crisis management through the Vets4Vets initiative.

Her work is part of a larger effort across veterinary medicine to cultivate better wellbeing and build a thriving profession, made all the more important by the added stressors of the pandemic.

"People who enter veterinary school are eager to be the best clinicians they can be, but there's more to being a clinician than being good in medicine or good in surgery," she says. "As we develop the mind of the clinician, we also have to develop the soul."

Read more on **page 14**.



UNSPLASH: HELENA LOPES