

SPRING/SUMMER 2022

# TRACKS

MAGAZINE

## EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES



AN OPPORTUNITY TO ELEVATE A  
WORLD-CLASS VETERINARY PROGRAM



**Virginia-Maryland**  
College of **Veterinary Medicine**



## MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

### Expanding Opportunities

As we conclude the academic year and look to the future, we are excited about what is to come. Although continuing challenges exist and new ones will occur, we celebrate our successes and embrace opportunities to affect changes that will benefit many for years to come.

With the launch of our #VTHbandanawagon campaign, we move forward with plans to expand the small animal Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH). This future expansion will provide critically needed space for leading-edge treatment and learning. Meanwhile, our faculty and staff continue to focus their skills and expertise on providing expert care and innovation to hospital patients and clients during each new day.

One recent success is the installation of a new underwater treadmill, replacing a nearly 20-year-old model. We express sincere gratitude to the donors who funded this impactful piece of equipment. Now, companion animals can more readily receive hydrotherapy to recover from surgery, promote mobility, and possibly avoid surgery for certain injuries.

Other innovative treatment and diagnosis developments at the college include a new ultrasound machine. Thanks to ever-evolving technology, this new machine yields better detail and higher sensitivity to detect abnormalities while improving the patient experience and acting as an important learning tool for students.

As the pandemic made clear, ventilators fulfill a crucial need to provide mechanical breathing for patients in critical condition who require longer-term care. The Emergency and Critical Care Service has just added a new lifesaving

mechanical ventilator. The VTH expansion will further support the growth of this service for the benefit of animals experiencing critical injuries or illness.

In addition to education of our students and provision of care to our patients, the college continues to make important and impactful contributions to research across many areas. One transformational research project involves the treatment of glioblastoma. The work of this research team has just been recognized with a five-year, \$3.8 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to further evaluate the unique delivery of an adapted therapeutic in affected dogs and initiate a human clinical trial.

Alumni of our college continue to do outstanding work on a national and international stage. Capt. Jennifer McQuiston (B.S. '93, DVM '97, M.S. '98), an epidemiologist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was part of a team that recently stopped the spread of a fatal, sporadic disease.

An outbreak of melioidosis was traced to an aromatherapy room spray after extensive investigation across multiple states. McQuiston credits her time at the college with inspiring her public health focus.

The college recently opened its physical doors to the community for the first time in two years with its 2022 Open House. It was wonderful to share some of the great work being done here, especially since more than 100 DVM and Public Health students volunteered to share their knowledge and experiences.

As Virginia Tech celebrates its sesquicentennial this year, our college is on an exciting trajectory. Expanding opportunities and strategic partnerships point toward a bright future as we safeguard the well-being of our current community and focus on the expanding impact that will result from our future advancements.

*M. Daniel Givens*



Dean M. Daniel Givens

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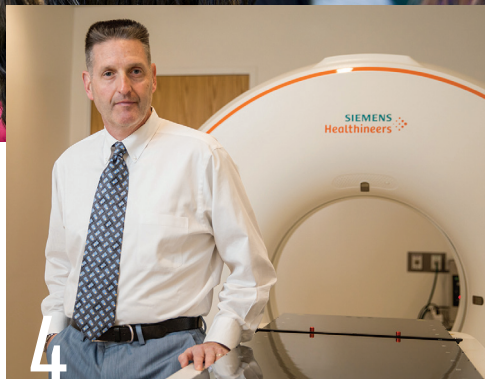
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### INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM WINS GRANT TO DEVELOP DRUG FOR BRAIN CANCER

The National Institutes of Health is awarding a \$3.8 million grant to John Rossmeisl, the Dr. and Mrs. Dorsey Taylor Mahin Professor of Neurology and Neurosurgery at the veterinary college, and Waldemar Debinski, cancer biology professor at the Wake Forest School of Medicine. The team will treat human brain cancer with a drug they have previously used to treat canines.

Over the course of five years, the grant will allow Rossmeisl and Debinski to hone a new method to treat glioblastoma, an aggressive and deadly form of brain cancer. The first two years will continue their research on treating canine glioma, and the last three years will treat patients in a clinical trial at Wake Forest Baptist Comprehensive Cancer Center.

The research will characterize the antitumor activity, safety, and pharmacokinetics of the drug Rossmeisl and Debinski have used in their canine cancer research.

Rossmeisl is the interim director of the Animal Cancer Care and Research Center, a state-of-the-art clinical and research facility in Roanoke and one of the college's three hospitals. Additionally, he serves as the associate department head of the Department of Small Animal Clinical Sciences and heads the Veterinary and Comparative Neuro-oncology Laboratory. He has collaborated with Debinski, director of the Brain Tumor Center of Excellence at Wake Forest School of Medicine's Comprehensive Cancer Center, since the early 2000s.

An earlier version of the drug went through human clinical trials, but it unfortunately failed. It cannot be given orally or injected, which presents a challenge.

"One of the major reasons why that clinical drug trial failed was not because the drug isn't effective against the tumor — it just wasn't delivered effectively to the target," explained Rossmeisl.

The team has refined a technique called convection-enhanced delivery (CED) to place catheters into the tumor tissue to administer the drug directly. The approach significantly improved the ability of the CED technique to efficiently and effectively deliver drugs to glioblastoma compared to previous trials, which has been fundamental to evaluating the safety and preliminary efficacy of the drug in dogs.

The version of the drug used in the previous human trials targeted one receptor in the tumor, and the version in the upcoming trials targets four. The drug not only kills the cancer cells, but when the cells die, the immune system initiates an



John Rossmeisl

immune response, killing the tumor more effectively. Part of the grant will be used to better characterize what that immune response is and further refine the delivery method through mapping and modeling.

The team recently finished a canine clinical trial that examined the toxicity of the drug. The team gave six times higher a dose than that which has been given to humans with no toxicity, and results of early trials showed that half of the dogs experienced tumor shrinkage, a remarkable achievement.

**“Personally, this is the ultimate embodiment of what I want to do. I put something in dogs that not only helps dogs, but it might help someone’s father, mother, sister, brother, daughter, or son.”**

– John Rossmeisl, the Dr. and Mrs. Dorsey Taylor Mahin Professor of Neurology and Neurosurgery and interim director of the Animal Cancer Care and Research Center.

This research aligns with the college's One Health approach to veterinary medicine, recognizing the dynamic interdependence of human, animal, and environmental health and promoting interdisciplinary collaboration.

"Personally, this is the ultimate embodiment of what I want to do. I put something in dogs that not only helps dogs, but it might help someone's father, mother, sister, brother, daughter, or son. If you statistically look at cancer clinical trials, the odds are stacked against us. But to me, that's far less important than the fact that at least we're going to try," said Rossmeisl.

## Professor emerita participated in National Academy of Sciences' Havana syndrome report

Marion Ehrich, professor emerita of pharmacology and toxicology at the veterinary college, was one of the experts called upon by the National Academy of Sciences to contribute to the report on Havana syndrome for the United States government.

Starting in late 2016, some United States diplomats, intelligence officials, and their family members in Havana, Cuba, reported suffering from a wide range of symptoms, including dizziness, ear pain, and cognitive difficulties. Soon, reports of "Havana syndrome" came in from locations all over the world and up to 1,000 cases have been reported.

The State Department asked the National Academy of Sciences to develop a report on Havana syndrome. The National Academy of Sciences is a nonprofit organization tasked with providing reports and advice to the United States government. The academy asked Ehrich for her input on the report.

Ehrich has been a member of the university community since 1976. Ehrich has made significant contributions to pharmacology and toxicology, particularly through her use of in vitro systems for mechanistic studies and safety assessment in neurotoxicology and her study of organophosphorus ester-induced delayed neuropathy mechanisms. Over her career, she was active in several federal agencies,

including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Defense, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Academy of Sciences, and she served as co-director for the college's Laboratory for Neurotoxicity Studies. The American College of Toxicology recently awarded Ehrich the Mildred Christian Women's Leadership in Toxicology Award.

Her role in the Havana syndrome report was as a reviewer and a presenter. She reviewed a study by Canadian researchers and in February 2020, she flew to Washington, D.C., to present on how to make a toxicological diagnosis. She also reviewed the final report.

"I thought that the composition of the committee was truly interesting. When you get people from all these diverse disciplines talking together, you really do get better science. When you have the statisticians, the epidemiologists, the physicians, the psychologists, the toxicologists, the radio frequency physicists, that really is impressive," said Ehrich.

The National Academy of Sciences report was released in December 2020. It found that microwave radiation was the most plausible cause, but it stressed that given the data, no firm conclusion could be reached.



Nisha Duggal

### RESEARCHER RECEIVES THREE GRANTS FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH TO COMBAT MOSQUITO-BORNE VIRUSES

West Nile virus, Usutu virus, Zika virus, and St. Louis encephalitis virus are all transmitted by mosquitoes and cause a significant threat to human health.

Nisha Duggal, an assistant professor of biomedical sciences and pathobiology, has recently received three R21 grants from the National Institutes of Health totaling \$825,000 to combat the transmission of these diseases, develop therapeutics, and predict future disease in humans.

"Mosquito-borne viruses are emerging globally, with increasing host range and disease potential. With this funding, we are determining who is most at risk for transmission and looking to develop future vaccines and therapeutics," said Duggal.

With these grants, Duggal and her research team will tackle Usutu virus, West Nile virus, and St. Louis encephalitis virus transmission and pathogenesis in mosquitos and birds; study Zika virus sexual transmission in humans; and use molecular virology and phylogenetic tools to predict future viral emergence and disease.



Marion Ehrich



Capt. Jennifer McQuiston (B.S. '93, DVM '97, M.S. '98), deputy director of the Division of High Consequence Pathogens and Pathology within CDC's National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases.

## Alumna helps solve deadly mysteries for the CDC

Perhaps the last place one would expect to find a deadly disease is in a lavender-and-chamomile aromatherapy bottle adorned with gemstones. When four cases of melioidosis broke out in the first half of 2021, killing two people in the U.S., Capt. Jennifer McQuiston (B.S. '93, DVM '97, M.S. '98), an epidemiologist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), was part of the team that traced the source of the bacteria to a product from Better Homes and Gardens. The product has since been recalled, and there have been no new cases of melioidosis.

As deputy director for the division managing the outbreak, McQuiston aided in overseeing the investigation, working with a team of experts that included state health departments, laboratory scientists, epidemiologists, and health communicators testing products like lotion, soap, hand sanitizer, and food items.

"For this outbreak, the CDC laboratory scientists worked heroically to test

hundreds of unusual and complicated samples. Ultimately, their ability to connect the cases to the products through whole-genome sequencing was what solved the puzzle," McQuiston said.

Though the outbreak is over and the immediate risk is contained, McQuiston's team is still testing hundreds of recalled specimens and working with the manufacturer and the Consumer Product Safety Commission to understand how the contamination occurred. Her ongoing work adds her to the ranks of alumni who are doing groundbreaking work that protects and serves communities.

"My time at the veterinary college was where my interest in public health was first sparked and nurtured. I credit Dr. Kevin Pelzer for that early interest in outbreak investigations and encouraging me to pursue this as a career," McQuiston said. "Working in the laboratory gave me the skills needed to understand and value laboratory work at CDC."

## Heritage breeds voted overall favorite in Linn's 2021 U.S. stamp poll



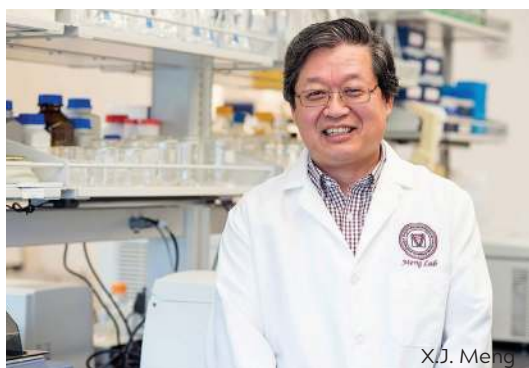
Linn's Stamp News readers selected 10 commemorative stamps showcasing American heritage breeds as the overall favorite United States 2021 stamp issue. Featuring images selected by Phillip Sponenberg, professor of pathology and genetics, the stamps were designed by Zack Bryant using photographs by acclaimed heritage breeds photographer Aliza Eliazarov.





## MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS

More than \$100,000 | September 2021 – April 2022



### AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE HONORS X.J. MENG AS LIFETIME FELLOW

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world's largest general scientific society and publisher of the Science family of journals, has elected Virginia Tech's X.J. Meng to the newest class of AAAS Fellows, among the most distinct honors within the scientific community.

Meng, University Distinguished Professor at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine and professor of internal medicine at Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, is being honored for his paradigm-shifting discoveries of animal hepatitis E viruses leading to the recognition of human hepatitis E as a zoonotic disease.

Meng's world-renowned work focuses on emerging and reemerging viral diseases that impact veterinary and human public health. Meng is widely considered one of the world's leading scientists in hepatitis E virus, porcine circovirus type 2, porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome virus, and porcine epidemic diarrhea virus.

#### Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (FARAD) VMCVM Component 2021

Principle Investigator (PI): Jennifer Davis, Department of Biomedical Sciences and Pathobiology (DBSP)  
Total Award: \$150,000  
Funding Agency: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)/National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

#### Evolution and Pathogenesis of Usutu Virus, an Emerging Arbovirus

PI: Nisha Duggal, DBSP  
Total Award: \$422,676  
Funding Agency: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)

#### FY21 NAHLN Infrastructure II Level 2

PI: Tanya LeRoith, DBSP  
Total Award: \$127,200  
Funding Agency: USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

#### Equine Bone Marrow-derived MSC to Combat Bacterial Biofilms

PI: Sarah Khatibzadeh, Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences (DLACS)  
Mentors: Sophie Bogers, DLACS, and Linda Dahlgren, DLACS  
Total Award: \$110,207  
Funding Agency: Morris Animal Foundation

#### Veterinary Scholars in Production and Regulatory Medicine

PI: Katharine Knowlton  
Co-Investigators (Co-I): Jacquelyn Pelzer, Department of Population Health Sciences (DPHS)  
Total Award: \$193,872  
Funding Agency: USDA/NIFA

#### Connexin-based Signaling in the Heart: Cellular and Exosomal

PI: Robert Gourdie, Fralin Biomedical Research Institute (FBRI)  
Co-I: Giulio Mencioti, Department of Small Clinical Sciences (DSACS)  
Total Award: \$100,000  
Funding Agency: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

#### Co-creating Evidence for Action: A Formative Evaluation of the Birth Equity Action & Research to Transform Health (BEARTH) Village

PI: Natalie Cook, DPHS  
Total Award: \$249,997  
Funding Agency: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

#### Breaking Down the Wall: Targeting Peptidoglycan to Understand and Diagnose Lyme Disease

PI: Brandon Jutras, Department of Biochemistry  
Co-I: Coy Allen, DBSP  
Total Award: \$150,000  
Funding Agency: Global Lyme Alliance

#### MRCS Community Mental Health Center Evaluation

PI: Mary Dunkenberger, School of Public and International Affairs  
Co-I: Sophie Wenzel, DPHS  
Total Award: \$253,143  
Funding Agency: Mount Rogers Community Services Board

#### Developing Methods for Precise, Safe and Target-location Specific Histotripsy of Liver Tumors

PI: Eli Vlasisavljevich, Department of Biomedical Engineering and Mechanics (BEAM) Co-I: Coy Allen, DBSP  
Total Award: \$178,821  
Funding Agency: NIH Subaward through the University of Wisconsin-Madison

#### Multi-receptor Targeting of Glioblastoma

PI: John Rossmeisl, DSACS  
Total Award: \$614,318  
Funding Agency: NIH Subaward through Wake Forest University

#### Effects of SARS-CoV-2 Antiviral Ribonucleoside Analogues on Mitochondrial DNA

PI: Alicia Pickrel, School of Neuroscience  
Co-I: Nisha Duggal, DBSP  
Total Award: \$440,900  
Funding Agency: NIAID

#### Development of a Safe and Effective Nanoparticle-based Vaccine Against Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus

PI: Mike Zhang, Department of Biological Systems Engineering  
Co-I: XJ Meng  
Total Award: \$630,000  
Funding Agency: USDA/NIFA



## Biomedical and veterinary sciences Ph.D. candidate receives National Institutes of Health grant

Jatia Mills, a biomedical and veterinary sciences Ph.D. candidate, has been awarded a highly selective diversity supplement grant through the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

These grants support those from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, disabled people, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds as part of the NIH's goal to increase diversity within the research community.

Mills said that the majority of the grant will go toward her research on investigating the neuroinflammatory response that occurs as a result of traumatic brain injury. Mills also aims to attend more conferences — for example, she recently had a poster accepted for the National Neurotrauma Symposium.

A leader and mentor, Mills is no stranger to connecting with others.

Mills is a member of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee at Virginia Tech's School of Neuroscience, and she was recently announced as president of the Black Graduate Student Organization.

She works with students through Virginia Tech's Initiative for Maximizing Student Development, a program for minority students who wish to pursue a Ph.D. with the goal of a career in biomedical research, and through Virginia Tech PREP, a post-baccalaureate biomedical research education program.

## MOHAMED SELEEM NAMED DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR ONE HEALTH RESEARCH

Mohamed Seleem (Ph.D. '06), the Tyler J. and Frances F. Young Chair in Bacteriology at the college, has been named director of the Center for One Health Research.

The Center for One Health Research (COHR) is a collaboration between the veterinary college and the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) — both of which have interest in cooperative research and scholarship related to infectious diseases.



Seleem's world-renowned research program focuses on developing new antimicrobials and improving delivery of drugs for the treatment of infectious diseases. Research in the Seleem Lab is highly collaborative and multidisciplinary, integrating bacteriology, mycology, molecular pathogenesis, pharmacology, and more.

During his time as director, Seleem plans to develop bacteriology and infectious disease as the center's focus. By specializing and hiring more faculty in these fields it will allow researchers to collaborate more and be more competitive when applying for funding. He also wishes to grow the community within the COHR.

"[The veterinary college] has a really special place in my heart — I graduated from here, I witnessed a lot of great discoveries here, so I would really like to take this further and help this place further," said Seleem.



## A global challenge: Addressing water and health issues from rural Appalachia to China

Inadequate access to safe drinking water remains a significant global challenge for low-income, rural communities around the world. Many people in Appalachia have adapted to a life with a number of inequities, one being a lack of safe and reliable drinking water.

“Exposure to contaminated drinking water is a problem that disproportionately impacts people living in rural areas of low- and middle-income countries around the world, as well as here in the United States,” said Alasdair Cohen, an assistant professor of environmental epidemiology in the Department of Population Health Sciences and an affiliated faculty member of the Fralin Life Sciences Institute.

Cohen has published research on global bottled water consumption trends and on bottled water quality and health in China, which also has implications for his research here in the United States, as a staggering 1.7 million Americans don't have reliable access to safe drinking water.

This figure comes as no surprise to water and public health specialists like Cohen and Leigh Anne Krometis, an associate professor in the Department of Biological Systems Engineering in the College of Engineering and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Cohen and Krometis are currently collaborating on field-based research projects to better understand drinking water contamination and bottled water use in rural areas of central Appalachia.



“Exposure to contaminated drinking water is a problem that disproportionately impacts people living in rural areas of low- and middle-income countries around the world, as well as here in the United States.

- Alasdair Cohen, an assistant professor of environmental epidemiology in the Department of Population Health Sciences.

## New lab kickstarts clinical research collaboration at veterinary college



Linda Dahlgren, professor large animal surgery, and Kevin Lahmers, clinical associate professor of anatomic pathology, work together in the new Collaborative Multidisciplinary Research Laboratory.

Collaboration is key to solving complex problems — and thanks to the new Collaborative Multidisciplinary Research Laboratory (CMRL) at the veterinary college, a wide array of veterinary clinical researchers are able to work together to tackle challenges. Over a dozen faculty, graduate students, and residents from across the college are currently utilizing this new space.

For faculty members, especially clinical faculty who do not have their own labs, research comes with several barriers; without space and support, research requires extra time, energy, and the learning of new research techniques. Thanks to the CMRL, these faculty members have a place to conduct

research, share ideas and resources, and give their students lab experience.

“The creation of the CMRL laboratory space is an exciting new opportunity to bring together diverse clinical specialists to tackle current and emerging complex challenges in veterinary research,” said S. Ansar Ahmed, professor of immunology and associate dean of research and graduate studies at the college.

“We anticipate that this space will allow the training of veterinary graduate students and residents in current technologies to address current and emerging veterinary clinical problems.”

## AROUND THE COLLEGE

### IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK!

Anyone walking around campus during this year's Open House could see why the veterinary college is a pillar of this community. The building and grounds were full of families exploring activities ranging from performing ultrasounds to how to milk a cow. Andrea Hill of Blacksburg, Virginia, brought her husband and children, aged 5 and 7, to Open House for the first time.

"We're having such a good time. The kids are loving it and how interactive and hands-on it is. They each adopted a stuffed animal and got to touch a turtle. It just brought everything to life," Hill said.

The activities and events went all day long. Some favorites were the Teddy Bear Repair, where members of the Class of 2023 demonstrated their surgical expertise by repairing stuffed animals that children brought from home. There was also a scavenger hunt by the Radiology Club for various levels, ranging from young children to veterinary students. In line with Virginia Tech's mission to serve, one of the biggest attractions at Open House was a fleece blanket project. Second-year veterinary student Kylie Fackrell, one of the volunteers in the tent, said the collaboration between a service fraternity and the Animal Companion Club resulted in over 20 fleece blankets being donated to the Montgomery County Animal Shelter.

When Ken King of Salem, Virginia, saw that Open House would be back this year, he decided to bring his grandson. His grandson's enthusiasm was a reminder of how impactful events such as these can be, especially for young aspiring veterinarians clutching sewn-up stuffed animals. "Kids say they want to be vets," King said, "but after actually seeing what goes on in the exam rooms, he was like, 'I want to be this when I grow up.'"



**Top:** Milk a cow activity at Open House. **Bottom right:** Exotic Pet Show and Tell with members of the Public Veterinary Practice Club. **Bottom left:** DVM student volunteers with the HokieBird and Dean M. Daniel Givens.

## Sesquicentennial HokieTalks celebrating 100 years of women at Virginia Tech



Shawna Klahn, associate professor of medical oncology at the Animal Cancer Care and Research Center (ACCRC), delivered a virtual HokieTalk presentation on March 23. Her talk, entitled "Translational Research in Pets to Advance Medicine for All Species," offered a 10-minute dive into the inspiring and impactful work she and the clinicians at the ACCRC undertake on a daily basis, work that will translate to the future care and treatment of cancer in human patients. This HokieTalk, which featured three female presenters from Roanoke's Health Science and Technology campus, was part of an ongoing series celebrating the university's sesquicentennial and more uniquely, the impact of 100 years of women at Virginia Tech.



**DVM Class of 2024 White Coat Ceremony**

Previously postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions, the White Coat Ceremony for the DVM Class of 2024 was held on Saturday, March 26, at the Moss Arts Center's Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre.





**EXPANDING  
OPPORTUNITIES**



JOIN THE





#VTHBandanaWagon

VETERINARY  
TEACHING  
HOSPITAL

VIRGINIA TECH

VIRGINIA-MARYLAND COLLEGE  
OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

# AN OPPORTUNITY TO ELEVATE A WORLD-CLASS VETERINARY PROGRAM

The veterinary college is launching the most ambitious fundraising campaign in its history, aiming to raise \$15 million to fuel excellence by renovating and expanding the Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH) on the Blacksburg campus.

The VTH is essential for producing compassionate and skilled veterinarians and builds the future of the veterinary profession through hands-on training of residents, interns, and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) students. However, since the college's inception in 1980, the DVM student class size has grown — from 64 to 126 and veterinary medicine itself has significantly changed over those 40 years. Nine new specialty services have been added and technology has dramatically advanced to provide additional diagnostic tools and treatments.

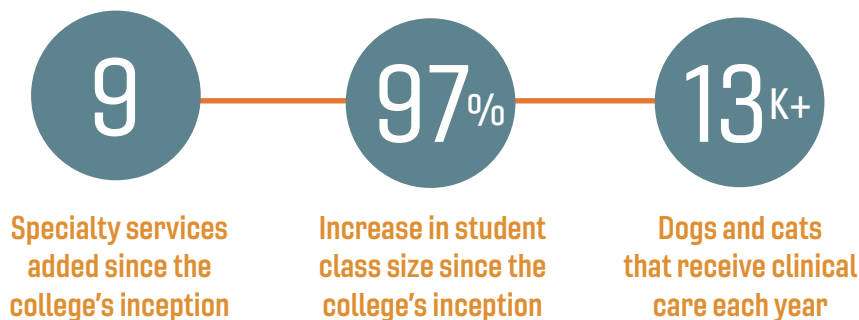
member of the university community since 1976, said, “When we first opened the hospital, the very small Phase I portion did not have air conditioning and the pharmacy was in a tiny room with a Dutch door. Space has always been a challenge, and the challenge has increased as services, techniques, and new modalities for diagnosis and treatment have been added.”

Veterinarians not only support the health of our beloved pets and companions, but they also address significant challenges such as food security, the transmission of diseases from animals to humans, and research into new therapies to fight cancer. The expansion will also boost research with state-of-the-art equipment and facilities and help attract the brightest scholars and educators who can tackle global problems head-on.

\$15 million in a defined loan instrument. This leaves \$15 million needed to complete the project.

Terry Swecker (B.S. '80, DVM '84, Ph.D. '90), director of the VTH and professor of production management medicine and clinical nutrition, said, “Like any medical industry, we evolve — and that means both new technology and new services. As we continue to evolve, we will see new areas of interest, technologies, and therapies. We have to create space so that students, interns, and residents can actively learn in that experiential environment.”

## GROWTH IN NUMBERS



The teaching model in academic hospitals involves small groups of students immersed in a specialty for weeks at a time. This model for experiential learning creates a need for physical space in addition to a patient treatment area with appropriate equipment for each specialty.

The VTH provides outstanding animal health care to the local community. Since its completion in 1987, it has experienced incredible growth in cases due to the increased demands for veterinary services across the region.

Marion Ehrich, professor emerita and co-director of the Laboratory for Neurotoxicity Studies who has been a

With a scheduled groundbreaking in 2024 and doors opening in 2026, the VTH expansion and renovation will add 37,000 square feet, provide necessary upgrades to current facilities, and incorporate unfinished space to allow continued growth.

Philanthropic partners are needed to ensure this project can occur in a timely fashion without increasing the financial burden on future students. The project's projected cost is \$45 million, with \$7 million promised from Virginia Tech, \$8 million in college funding and philanthropic support already committed, and





“This expansion will increase the number of patients and clients that notably improving the experience of faculty, staff, and students





receive timely, compassionate, and cutting-edge clinical care while through an improved hospital environment. - Dean M. Daniel Givens



Renderings derived from a feasibility study by an architectural firm specializing in veterinary teaching hospitals.







Flori Bliss, small animal physical rehabilitation technician, and VTH patient using the new underwater treadmill.

## VETERINARY TEACHING HOSPITAL GETS A NEW UNDERWATER TREADMILL

One of the critical tools at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital's rehabilitation service is the underwater treadmill. Underwater therapy is essential for pre- and post-surgery strengthening, age-related arthritis treatment, gait issues, overweight dogs, and joint and muscle problems, as it allows pets to improve muscle tone and limb use with less risk of reinjury.

After 20 years of daily use, the VTH's underwater treadmill was on its last legs. Due to constant repairs and the limited functionality of a 20-year-old machine, the rehab team was restricted when treating their patients.

"Without regular rehab, my patients were taking longer to recover and were losing some of that mobility and quality of life," said Flori Bliss, small animal physical rehabilitation technician.

To address this concern, the advancement office partnered with hospital administrators to find a way to replace this essential piece of equipment. During a visit to campus, Ray and Diann Boyd of Georgetown, Texas, who have already generously named the veterinary college as a beneficiary of their estate, saw the further impact they could make by funding a new Oasis underwater treadmill. This top-of-the-line machine accommodates breeds of all shapes and sizes and creates a fully immersive hydrotherapy experience for every pet.

"It's been a real whirlwind putting the new machine in and learning about its advanced features. It's such a big improvement. I can do so much with this new treadmill that I could not do with the old," said Bliss.







Left: Bobbi Conner, clinical associate professor of emergency and critical care medicine, and fourth-year DVM student Maya Wallick look after a patient that recently used the ventilator at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

## THE ONE PLACE IN THE STATE OF VIRGINIA WHERE PATIENTS IN CRITICAL CARE CAN BREATHE

Thanks to a multidisciplinary team led by Bobbi Conner, clinical associate professor and service chief in emergency and critical care, there's a new mechanical ventilator at the college with the unique capability to provide breathing support for patients in need of lung support for long-term care.

Providing mechanical ventilation breathing help for patients in longer-term care supports patients in critical shape. "When breathing is difficult for the body, it requires much more energy, leading to respiratory failure. These are cases when having a mechanical ventilation machine is useful because we can take over the work of breathing and give that animal a break by providing additional support until whatever muscles or nerves can be healed and the lungs can breathe for themselves," said Conner.

When Conner was hired in Aug. 2020, she saw an opportunity to expand the emergency care options. "When I got

here, I realized our capabilities for providing mechanical ventilation were not where they could be, so we spent several months working on getting our infrastructure up and running," said Conner.

Conner is the only criticalist at the veterinary college and in the years since she arrived, she's brought a myriad of knowledge and skills that bolster the emergency services the college can provide.

The team's efforts to provide long-term breathing support paid off earlier this year when the first patient was successfully treated with the new mechanical ventilator. "Neurology had a patient with a disk herniation in the neck that impacted the dog's ability to breathe normally. They took her to MRI, then surgery, and she recovered on the ventilator for a few days. She would not have survived without these interventions, but today the dog is doing very well," Conner said.

"The expansion of the small animal teaching hospital fulfills a critical need to provide leading-edge learning opportunities for future veterinarians while offering clients world-class treatment and care for their beloved companions.

- Terry Swecker (B.S. '80, DVM '84, Ph.D. '90), director of the VTH

### PARTNER WITH VA-MD VET MED

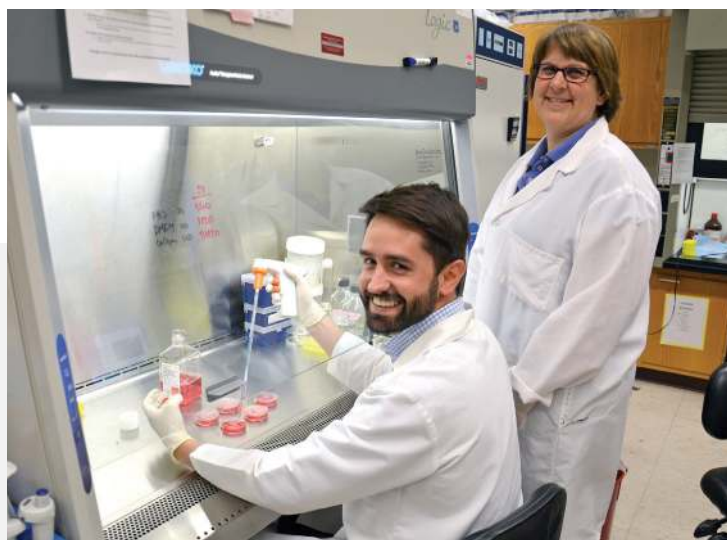
Sandra Torget, assistant dean of advancement  
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## Linda Dahlgren awarded 2021 Zoetis Award for Veterinary Research Excellence

Linda Dahlgren, professor of large animal surgery, was awarded the 2021 Zoetis Award for Veterinary Research Excellence. Dahlgren's research primarily focuses on regenerative medicine approaches to treating musculoskeletal injuries. She is a founding member and co-director of the Regenerative Medicine Interdisciplinary Graduate Research Program. Her early work focused on investigating the mechanisms by which adult stem cells derived from adipose tissue improve tendon healing in horses. Through her tissue engineering work with Aaron Goldstein, associate professor at the Department of Chemical Engineering, Dahlgren developed an interest in how mechanical force and the transcription factor scleraxis influence the differentiation of adult stem cells into tendon fibroblasts. Most recently, Dahlgren's focus turned to the use of macrophage progenitor cells from bone marrow to restore joint



Linda Dahlgren and former Ph.D. student Bruno Menarim.

homeostasis in horses and people with osteoarthritis. This work is ongoing in collaboration with her former Ph.D. student Bruno Menarim, who now works at the Gluck Equine Research Center at the University of Kentucky. This work has generated four exciting publications with another two in progress.

In addition to winning awards like the 2021 Zoetis Award for Veterinary Research Excellence, Dahlgren said mentoring has been the highlight of her career, "My goal has been to produce early career scientists that can take their discoveries beyond what I have achieved."

## IN MEMORIAM



### DAVID S. LINDSAY

David S. Lindsay, professor of parasitology, passed away on Nov. 17, 2021. Lindsay taught parasitology to graduate and undergraduate students for 24 years before retiring earlier last year. Before joining the faculty at Virginia Tech, he was a senior research fellow at Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine.

His research focused on Apicomplexan parasites that cause coccidiosis, cryptosporidiosis, and toxoplasmosis in humans and domestic animals. He also studied zoonotic flagellates that cause leishmaniasis and Chagas's disease.

Over his career, Lindsay authored 450 papers and 40 book chapters. He was cited more than 15,900 times and gave over 500 conference presentations. His publication record was

extraordinary, and it led to worldwide recognition for his expertise.

"He established collaborative relationships with parasitologists and other scientists worldwide and was unfailingly generous to students and colleagues with his time and extensive knowledge," said Anne Zajac, Professor Emeritus of Parasitology.

Lindsay was a distinguished veterinary parasitologist of the American Association of Veterinary Parasitologists and a member of the American Society of Parasitologists.

"His work is internationally renowned and will impact the field of parasitology for many years to come," said Margie Lee, professor and head of the Department of Biomedical Sciences and Pathobiology.

## AROUND THE HOSPITALS



### Saving Valentino

The birth of a silver-gray foal to her donkey, Margaret, completely surprised Elaine del Cerro Yau of Warrenton, Virginia.

Once discovered, the newborn initially appeared to be thriving, but del Cerro Yau noticed his attempt to suckle the walls of his stall and became concerned for his well-being. Her veterinarian promptly referred the foal to the Equine Medical Center for further diagnostics, treatment, and care.

Upon arrival, the foal was down and needed to be placed on a gurney for safe transport into the hospital. During her

initial exam, Emily Schaefer, clinical assistant professor of equine medicine, noted the foal's decreased alertness and weak suckle reflex. When attempting to nurse, the foal aspirated milk, lacked gut sounds, had weak curled ears, and could barely manage a few steps. A cardiac exam revealed a systolic murmur on the left side of his heart, and an ultrasound of the thoracic region revealed mild abnormalities in his lung fields.

The foal's clinical signs led to a diagnosis of neonatal maladjustment syndrome, including failure of transfer of passive immunity, severe low blood sugar, and increased kidney values. Supportive care was initiated, including administering intravenous antibiotics, hyperimmune plasma, gastro protectants, and rehydrating and placing a feeding tube.

After five days of hospitalization, the silver-gray donkey foal — since named Valentino — was bright and comfortable with no signs of discomfort. The little guy, weighing in at a mere 44 pounds, was ready to go home!

"Having never faced an emergency like this, we were panic-stricken — Dr. Schaefer was very patient and rang us every day with updates" said del Cerro Yau. "We are certain that without the exceptional medical attention given immediately to Valentino, Margaret would have returned home without him."

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BANDANA

The legendary feline detective Furlock Holmes, unravels a veterinary mystery

*Illustrations by Steven White*

In my time working alongside the renowned feline detective Furlock Holmes, I have witnessed no shortage of life's oddities. Of the many strange and vexing cases involving my friend, however, few have made so strong an impression upon me as that relating to the planned expansion of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital. For indeed, few mysteries have entailed a solution so fantastical as to seem not only improbable, but indeed quite impossible.

I awoke one April morning to the sound of insistent knocking upon the door of the suite of rooms Furlock and I shared. Furlock, like many his species, is not, as a rule, an early riser, often prowling the neighborhood into the wee hours and retiring to his cat bed as the first rays of dawn pierced the sky.

Thus, I was much surprised as I stretched my forelimbs and stirred from my sleeping place to find Furlock already ushering a much-agitated human visitor into the parlor.

"Pray, take a seat," bid the inimitable Siamese sleuth. "I, as I'm sure you are aware, am Furlock Holmes. And may I introduce my colleague, Dogtor Watson."

The visitor, a slim, intelligent-looking woman, shook my proffered paw and took a seat upon the chair we maintain for our human clientele. She fidgeted nervously and then cleared her throat. "I'm not sure where to begin. I trust what I say will be kept in confidence?"

"Of course, Professor Larson," Furlock replied.



The visitor and I regarded one another with mirror-image looks of astonishment.

"But how have you divined her identity, Holmes?" I gasped, giving my long ears a baffled shake.

"I have been expecting her," Furlock said.



**>> THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES  
ON OUR WEBSITE**

[vetmed.vt.edu/news/tracks-magazine](http://vetmed.vt.edu/news/tracks-magazine)





## DEAR WAGNER

Wagner Dunleavy, therapy dog, provides pet-to-pet advice on relationships, wellness, lifestyle, and more

Dear Wagner,

I'm a 2-year-old golden retriever, and last year I became the proud mother of four healthy puppies. As I look to my next pregnancy, though, I'm nervous. I experienced complications with my first delivery and ended up having an emergency C-section. Thankfully, the puppies survived, but the recovery from surgery was difficult and my human servants had to take care of the puppies for me for a few days.

How do I know the same thing won't happen again?

Sincerely,  
Dam(sel) in Distress

Dear Damsel,

What a frightening experience. I'm sorry that happened to you and glad to hear things turned out well in the end.

To help answer your question, I turned first to Julie Cecere, clinical associate professor of theriogenology, the branch of veterinary medicine that deals with animal obstetrics and reproductive systems.

"To ensure a healthy pregnancy, the mom — or 'dam' as we call female animal parents—must be as healthy as possible before breeding," Cecere said.

Cecere and her theriogenology colleagues at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital offer a range of pre-breeding services, including genetic counseling, health testing, routine health management, and diet recommendations, that are designed to ensure the best possible outcomes for both dam and offspring. The therio

team will even help arrange a "one-stop shop" visit that can encompass a full battery of health screenings for known breed-related conditions related to major organ systems like the eyes, skeletal structure, and heart. This health testing is recommended for all breeding animals. The service also offers routine breeding management of both you and your intended mate, including semen analysis, breeding and pregnancy management, and advice on whelping preparation — all to ensure the animal and owner have the best care possible during what can be a scary and intimidating experience.

Has your body condition score been checked lately? I know this is a sensitive subject, but another of our specialists, Orsolya Balogh, JoAnne S. O'Brien Professor of Theriogenology, emphasized that maternal obesity is a common health issue that can lead to birth complications in both humans and animals. I'm a retriever, too, and if you, like me, have trouble resisting that extra scoop of kibble, I know this isn't what you want to hear! Sadly, science doesn't lie (although I'm convinced the scale does).

I hope you and your owner will take advantage of the many pre-breeding services offered by the teaching hospital's therio team, and that you leave feeling like one healthy mother.

Yours in good health,  
Wagner

*Wagner completed his advanced training through Service Dogs of Virginia in 2018. He currently assists in individual and group therapy and outreach activities through Virginia Tech's Cook Counseling Center.*



## New outdoor equine arena at Veterinary Teaching Hospital allows for year-round evaluations

A newly constructed outdoor equine arena will dramatically help provide diagnostic information on the horses brought to the Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH) for lameness or performance issues.

"A safe, reliable surface is incredibly important for a lameness or performance exam. This new arena offers us the opportunity to evaluate the horse at all gaits, and it was thoughtfully designed and the footing carefully chosen to withstand all sorts of weather conditions so that we can evaluate horses year-round," said Lauren Trager, clinical assistant professor of equine sports medicine in the Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences.

The arena was also deliberately placed next door to the podiatry barn, where Travis Burns, associate professor of practice and chief of farrier services, unites the skills and experience of farriers with the college's veterinary specialists to provide therapeutic foot care for horses.

Burns said, "It will dramatically help provide diagnostic information on the horses brought to the VTH for lameness or performance issues, which can only be good for the overall well-being of the horse."

**Top:** Reina, a 13-year-old Oldenburg, is evaluated at the new outdoor equine arena at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital.



“A dedicated Emergency and Critical Care Service will allow our clinicians to focus more on their specialties, enhancing the quality and efficiency of care for our equine patients and providing the best possible experience for our clients.

-Michael Erskine, Director of the  
Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center

### Expanding opportunities in equine emergency and critical care

The Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center (EMC) is a full-service equine referral hospital that is open every minute of every day to receive critical emergency cases that require immediate diagnosis, treatment, and care.

Our world-class, board-certified veterinarians and highly trained clinical support staff, supported by advanced diagnostic equipment and equine-specific facilities, have an exceptional record of saving horses' lives and serving a critical need in our equine community. Over the last decade, the center has seen a significant increase in the number of complex, critical cases that rely on our emergency services to save the life of the patient.

The center's current emergency service is staffed by the same board-certified clinicians and technicians that work tirelessly throughout the day on scheduled appointments and elective surgeries. This limits the number of cases that can be seen on any given day. Moreover, a daytime emergency case can mean that scheduled appointments are delayed or rescheduled, often creating a tremendous logistical issue for the affected clients.

The increased expertise, time, and infrastructure required to accommodate this way of delivering emergency and critical care services has led the center's leadership to an innovative solution: a dedicated Emergency and Critical Care Service, staffed by board-certified veterinarians with advanced emergency medicine and surgery training.

This model includes two new emergency and critical care clinicians and four new technicians, creating two dedicated emergency and critical care teams to accommodate around-the-clock coverage. These additions to the center's team will also allow our current clinicians to increase their caseload, covering the cost of the new emergency and critical care teams within three years of its inception.

“A dedicated Emergency and Critical Care Service will allow our clinicians to focus more on their specialties, enhancing the quality and efficiency of care for our equine patients and providing the best possible experience for our clients,” said Michael Erskine, director of the EMC. “It will also intrinsically create a better work-life balance for both clinicians and technicians, which will help us to retain essential members of our team and be a leader in the field of equine medicine.”

While this new service will become self-sufficient within three years, the EMC is seeking philanthropic partners to help bridge the gap of the initial cost to establish these new positions. Your investment in this project promotes retention and recruitment of world-class clinicians and technical staff, enhances the quality and efficiency of service, and keeps costs down for our loyal clients.



## Striving for a better life for equine veterinarians

In August of 2021, Maria and David Williams found themselves at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH) with their thoroughbred, Whimsy, after their trainer and local veterinarian recommended him for further treatment for a fever of unknown origin. Longtime horse owners from Hickory, North Carolina, the Williamses knew getting Whimsy to a facility with a highly trained staff that have access to state-of-the-art equipment was vital for his health.

received that giving back to the college to support future equine veterinarians was the clear path.

“Equine veterinary medicine is unlike other veterinary practices. The hours are daunting, the work is physically demanding, and they are on the road constantly,” Maria explained. “I’d like to see Virginia Tech attract more equine veterinary students and help support those students with the emotional and physical challenges they will experience.”



Throughout Whimsy’s four-day stay at the VTH, Caitlin Malik, the resident on his case, kept the Williamses informed every step of the way. “Dr. Malik took great care and attention to provide exceptional care to our boy,” Maria said. “She and the rest of the staff at the hospital were professional and very loving to our horse as well as keeping us updated daily about his progress and challenges.”

Although the underlying cause of the fever was never determined, the doctors and technicians were able to get Whimsy on the path to recovery. The Williamses were so impressed with the attentive and thorough care they

To help ease the burdens of those challenges, the Williamses established a new endowed scholarship, the Maria and David Williams Equine Veterinary Scholarship, with a generous commitment to the college of half a million dollars over the next five years.

“I envision our gift will help young equine veterinary students graduate with the opportunity to begin their careers with less debt and more freedom so that they can begin to pursue their careers and lives from a starting place that is more secure and less stressed by debt.”

“I envision our gift will help young equine veterinary students graduate with the opportunity to begin their careers with less debt and more freedom so that they can begin to pursue their careers and lives from a starting place that is more secure and less stressed by debt.”

- Maria Williams



# GIVING TO THE COLLEGE

## GRATITUDE ABOUNDS

“Thirty-nine,” Dean M. Daniel Givens said to a crowd of scholarship recipients and donors. “Thirty-nine of the 126 students who started our program this fall received scholarships because of the commitment of individuals and organizations represented in this room.”

Each year, the veterinary college hosts An Evening of Gratitude to gather scholarship donors and recipients to celebrate and show gratitude for our donors’ commitment to the next generation of veterinarians. On March 19, this event was able to be held in-person once again and the room was buzzing with energy as people discussed the impact scholarships have on the lives of students — and the ongoing need to provide more scholarship funding.

At the onset of the event, donors such as Angela Shelor King were able to connect with students and express why giving back is important to them. After hearing horror stories of vet students living out of their cars, she wanted to help in any way she could, especially because she had such positive experiences bringing her own pets to the Veterinary Teaching Hospital. “I never hear vets say, ‘I want to make money.’ It’s the passion for animals, helping people, and giving back,” King said.

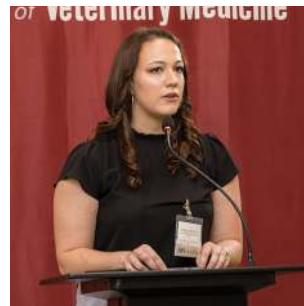
This evening allows donors the opportunity to hear firsthand from students about the importance of scholarships. Second-year student Savannah Weatherford was excited to express her gratitude as she mingled with donors.

“My scholarship covered most of my housing fall semester,” Weatherford said. “Having people willing to help us with our passion for animals and come out of school with less debt is a real privilege.”

Evenings such as these create interpersonal relationships that encourage and inspire individuals with the means to help aspiring health professionals — an important goal as showing faith in students is crucial during the trials of full-time graduate professional study.

As the event neared its end, there was an opportunity for donors, students, and faculty to address the group. Mike Stanton, a committed supporter of student scholarships, made an impassioned speech encouraging the student body. “As soon-to-be veterinarians, you are the healers of [the world’s] creatures. If you ever feel overwhelmed by your studies or by the challenges and pains of your veterinary practice, don’t lose sight of your incomparable contributions as a selfless healer.”

Donor support goes beyond helping students financially. Third-year scholarship recipient Stephanie Lees told the crowd, “What may seem like a simple act of donating to a scholarship fund is actually an invaluable gift to students. It allows us to decrease our stress levels, focus on our studies, and sustain our mental health. Your support truly is a precious asset. Your impact is far beyond financial.”



**What may seem like a simple act of donating to a scholarship fund is actually an invaluable gift to students. It allows us to decrease our stress levels, focus on our studies, and sustain our mental health ... Your impact is far beyond financial.**

- Stephanie Lees, DVM Class of 2023

**Top** (clockwise): Phillip Sponenberg, professor of pathology and genetics with student scholarship recipients. Scholarship donor and speaker, Chris Meade and Maggie Meikle, associate development director. Dean M. Daniel Givens with Joseph and Angela King and student scholarship speaker, Stephanie Lees (DVM '23). **Bottom** (clockwise) Scholarship donor and speaker Mike Stanton with scholarship recipients. Emily Poteat (DVM '22) with scholarship donor, Jennifer Stanton Givens with scholarship donor, Bernie Cosell.





## Virginia Tech's Giving Day launches plans for VTH Expansion

Virginia Tech's annual Giving Day fosters a lot of excitement each year, and this year was no different as our community brought to life the plans for the expansion of the small animal Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH).

In the weeks leading up to this special 24 hours, our community jumped aboard the #VTHBandanaWagon by posting pictures of their animals in VTH bandanas to spread the word about the importance of this expansion, which will provide the best possible hands-on training for future veterinarians and accommodate the growing demand for veterinary care.

When all was said and done, the veterinary college had an exceptional Giving Day with

a total of 389 donors raising \$132,700, a 57% increase in donor participation over last year's Giving Day. Donor participation each Giving Day makes a great impact as it unlocks challenges from generous donors, and this year, we unlocked a \$42,500 gift for the VMCVM hospital system and an \$8,000 gift for the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center.

"I am awed by the support and dedication of those who are so committed to the success of this college," said M. Daniel Givens, dean of the college. "That appreciation starts with those who show up each day to diligently pursue the college's missions of education, research, and service and extends to every member of our community who supports our college in any way."

Giving Day participation has increased by **57%** over last four years.



Fourth-year veterinary students with Dean M. Daniel Givens and his dog, Tag.



Susan West Marmagas (fourth from left) with MPH students.

## Susan West Marmagas Public Health Scholarship

What started as a crowdfunding project to honor the memory of Susan West Marmagas, who was director of Virginia Tech's Master of Public Health (MPH) program and an associate professor of practice in the Department of Population Health Sciences, has evolved into an endowment. Marmagas' brother and sister-in-law, Roger and Deborah West, pledged the difference between what was raised in the campaign and endowment level to create a new permanent scholarship.

The Susan West Marmagas Public Health Endowed Scholarship Fund began as part of a Virginia Tech campaign spearheaded by friends and colleagues to honor the memory of Marmagas, who died on Dec. 23, 2018.

The Wests wanted to honor the intention behind the campaign and the dedication and passion of Marmagas, so they created a permanent fund in Marmagas' memory.

Marmagas was passionate about improving health in rural Appalachian communities while championing her public health students both professionally and personally. The first endowed scholarship in the Department of Population Health Sciences will support underrepresented students in the program. Based on Marmagas' desire to improve access to public health in Appalachian communities, students who grew up in the region, or are from families in Appalachia, will receive priority for the award each year.

Marmagas' career focused on engaging health professionals and scientists in strategic discussions with the goal of implementing evidence-based protective public policy. This scholarship will lead to new champions for this important goal.

## CONNECT+2022

Mentor Program + Career Fair + Reunion + Continuing Education  
Students + Alumni + Practitioners // October 20-22, Blacksburg, VA

### JOIN US OCT. 20-22 FOR CONNECT 2022!

Connect hosts an opportunity for students, alumni, and practitioners to meet and share the collective interest and mutual benefit of mentorship, career opportunities, continuing education, and reunion celebrations. All alumni and practitioners (looking to mentor and/or hire) are welcomed and encouraged to attend. Connect 2021 hosted over 350 attendees; we look forward to expanding the opportunities and celebration at this year's Connect events!

There will be special focus on alumni class reunion years '87, '92, '97, '02, '07, '12, '17; be sure to connect with your classmates!

Go to [vetmed.vt.edu/connect](http://vetmed.vt.edu/connect) for more information and to register.

#### CONNECT 2022 OVERVIEW

<b>THURS., OCT. 20</b> 5:30-8 p.m.	Mentor Welcome Reception
<b>FRI., OCT. 21</b> 8:30-9:30 a.m. 9 a.m.-12 p.m. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. 12-1 p.m. 1-4 p.m. 2-3 p.m. 5-7 p.m.	Breakfast Mentor Day Activities Career Fair Lunch Alumni Board of Directors Meeting ( <i>board members only</i> ) Optional Tours College Celebration
<b>SAT., OCT. 22</b> 8 a.m.-3 p.m. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. 12-1 p.m.	CE Program (Alumni Speakers) Student Job Interviews Alumni and Faculty Awards Presentation

#### Upcoming 2022 Events:

July 29-Aug. 3 – AVMA Conference and Alumni Reception, Philadelphia, PA

Oct. 20-22 – Connect 2022, Blacksburg, VA

For more details about upcoming alumni events, go to [vetmed.vt.edu/alumni](http://vetmed.vt.edu/alumni)

#### 2022 VMCVM ALUMNI AWARDS

##### Lifetime Achievement Alumni Award:

Capt. Jennifer Hensley McQuiston (B.S. '93, DVM '97, M.S. '98), DACVPM

##### Outstanding Recent Alumni Award:

Lt. Cmdr. Caitlin Cossaboom (B.S. '10, MPH '14, Ph.D. '15, DVM '17)

##### Outstanding Faculty Alumni Award:

Phillip Sponenberg, professor of pathology/genetics in the department of biomedical sciences and pathobiology

All alumni award recipients will receive their awards on Saturday, Oct. 22, during the Connect 2022 events.

#### 2022 VVMA VIRGINIA VETERINARY AWARDS VMCVM ALUMNI RECIPIENTS

##### Distinguished Virginia Veterinarian Award:

Maureen Ostlund Ward (DVM '09)

##### Mentor of the Year Award:

Anne K. Bazilwich (DVM '97)

##### Veterinary Service Award:

Heather Jenkins-Brazzell (DVM '98)

##### Recent Graduate Leadership Award:

Courtney Conroy (B.S. '13, DVM '17)

#### ALUMNI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The college's Alumni Board of Directors represents the voices of more than 4,000 alumni. Consisting of up to 25 alumni who span the college's degree programs, the board strives to foster goodwill among alumni, faculty, students, and friends of the veterinary college; to support the engagement efforts of the broader alumni community; and to drive future programs and initiatives at the college.

Join us in welcoming the board's newest members:

Robert Bell (B.S. '86, M.S. '89, DVM '07)

Britt Carr Benson (DVM '12)

Kelly Catanzaro (DVM '19, Ph.D. '19)

Brittany Diehl (DVM '19)

Frank William Pierson (DVM '84, Ph.D. '93)

Julie Sanders (DVM '09)

Courtney Wiegard (DVM '05)

Jessica Wootton (DVM '13)

Learn more about the Alumni Board of Directors at [vetmed.vt.edu/alumni](http://vetmed.vt.edu/alumni).





## Mentorship success at Connect 2021

For almost 20 years, the mentorship program at the college has connected students with professionals in the field and allies in veterinary medicine. Connect 2021 was another success, with forged relationships that have ongoing benefits for students to reap throughout their graduate education and professional careers.

Rocky Deutsch (DVM '85) participates in the mentorship program to help give students the perspective of a practicing veterinarian and help them sculpt their careers in whatever discipline they choose to follow.

"The title of 'veterinarian' can mean so many different things, so it is important to be a sounding board as the student navigates through the process of selecting where they may be in the next few years," Deutsch said.

Students rave about the program.

"My mentorship experience has allowed me to pursue my veterinary education more boldly," said Caitlin Swecker, a fourth-year veterinary student in the mixed animal track with mentor Brian Neumann (DVM '14). "Knowing that I have the support and confidence of my mentor has encouraged me while in veterinary school. Dr. Neumann is also very open to hosting me at his clinic whenever I can travel to that area."

The mentorship program is a partnership with the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA). VVMA director Robin Schmitz said, "The greatest success is when students are in their fourth year, and they get a job with or through their mentor. Veterinary medicine is a small profession, and a lot of people make connections over the years, so if I see a student get a job, that's a success."

>> For video, go to [bit.ly/mentor-day-2021](https://bit.ly/mentor-day-2021)



March Goes On at VMCVM event

## Globally attended equine lecture series raises \$6,000 for the VMCVM Wellness Memorial Fund

An organization dedicated to educating both aspiring and established veterinary professionals, the veterinary college hosted a free, donation-based virtual equine lecture series in January, raising over \$6,000 for the VMCVM Wellness Memorial Fund.

Because the 2022 Equine Lecture Series event was virtual, the impact of the event spanned many countries. Over 200 attendees from all over the world were able to access the resources provided by experts at the teaching hospital while receiving continuing education hours in specialized topics. Lauren Trager (DVM '14, M.S. '19), clinical instructor in the Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences, presented a lecture called "Diagnostic and Therapeutic Approaches to Suspensory Ligament Desmitis."

"I was honored to be given the opportunity to speak to such a large and diverse group of my colleagues. Veterinarians have enough on their plates as it is, and their time is so valuable. I was very appreciative of those who chose to spend a few of their evening hours with me listening, asking questions, and engaging in a great conversation," said Trager.

Though the lectures were free, attendees had the option to give back to the college, and many did. With \$6,000 worth of donations put toward the VMCVM Wellness Memorial Fund, the equine lecture series is a testament to the success of the college and its willingness to serve.

## March Goes On at VMCVM

On Friday, March 25, the college hosted an important diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) event as part of the Virginia Tech Sesquicentennial Celebration series. The event, March Goes On at VMCVM featured a panel discussion of six minority alumni panelists and four student moderators, who navigated a conversation on diversity across the decades with a focus on DEI efforts at the college in the future. The panel discussion hosted over 100 attendees, and afterward, students and alumni met for the first implementation of the Diversity Mentorship Program, where they discussed their personal and professional experiences as well as future goals and opportunities.





VA-MD College of Veterinary Medicine  
205 Duck Pond Drive  
Blacksburg, VA 24061

[vetmed.vt.edu](http://vetmed.vt.edu)

Rendering derived from a feasibility study by an architectural firm specializing in veterinary teaching hospitals.

