

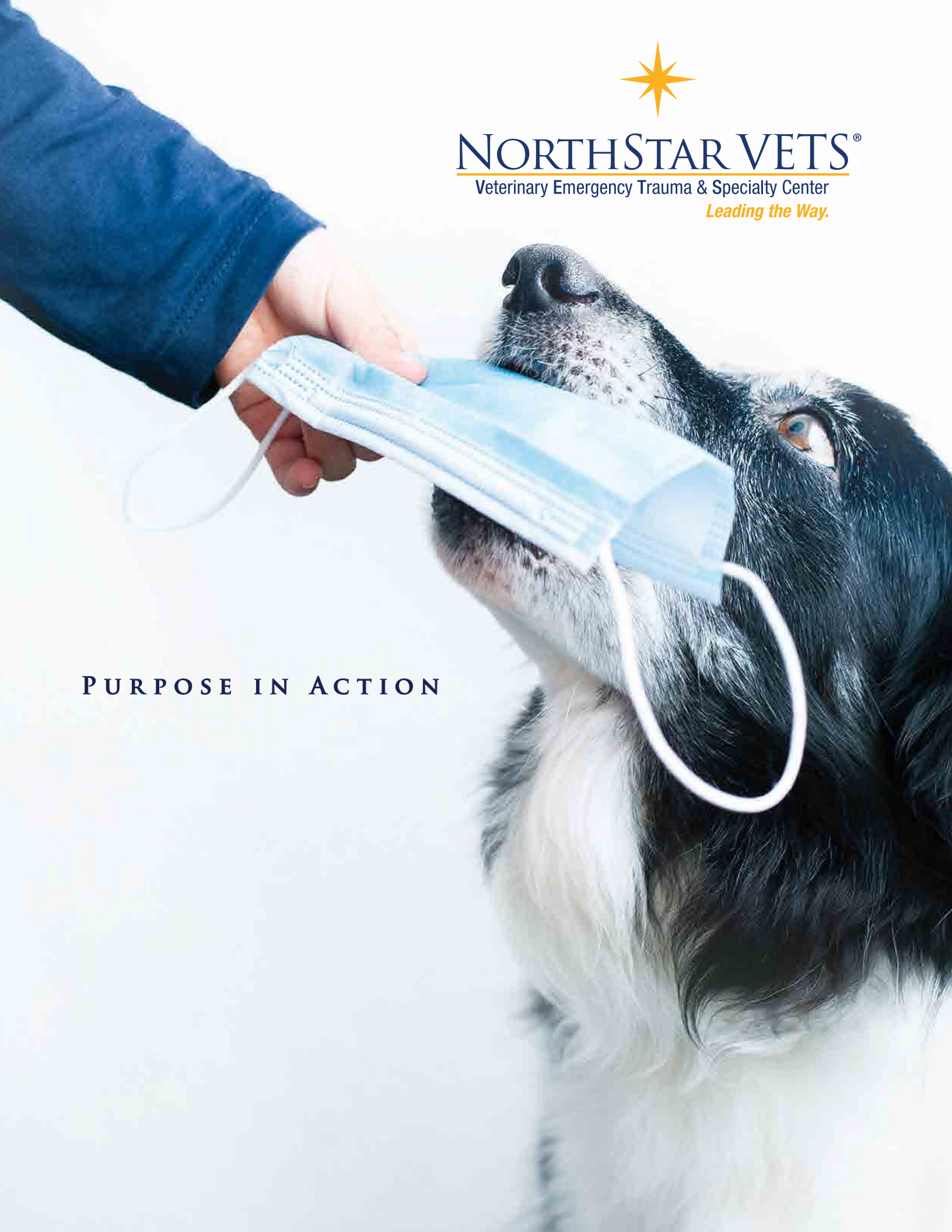


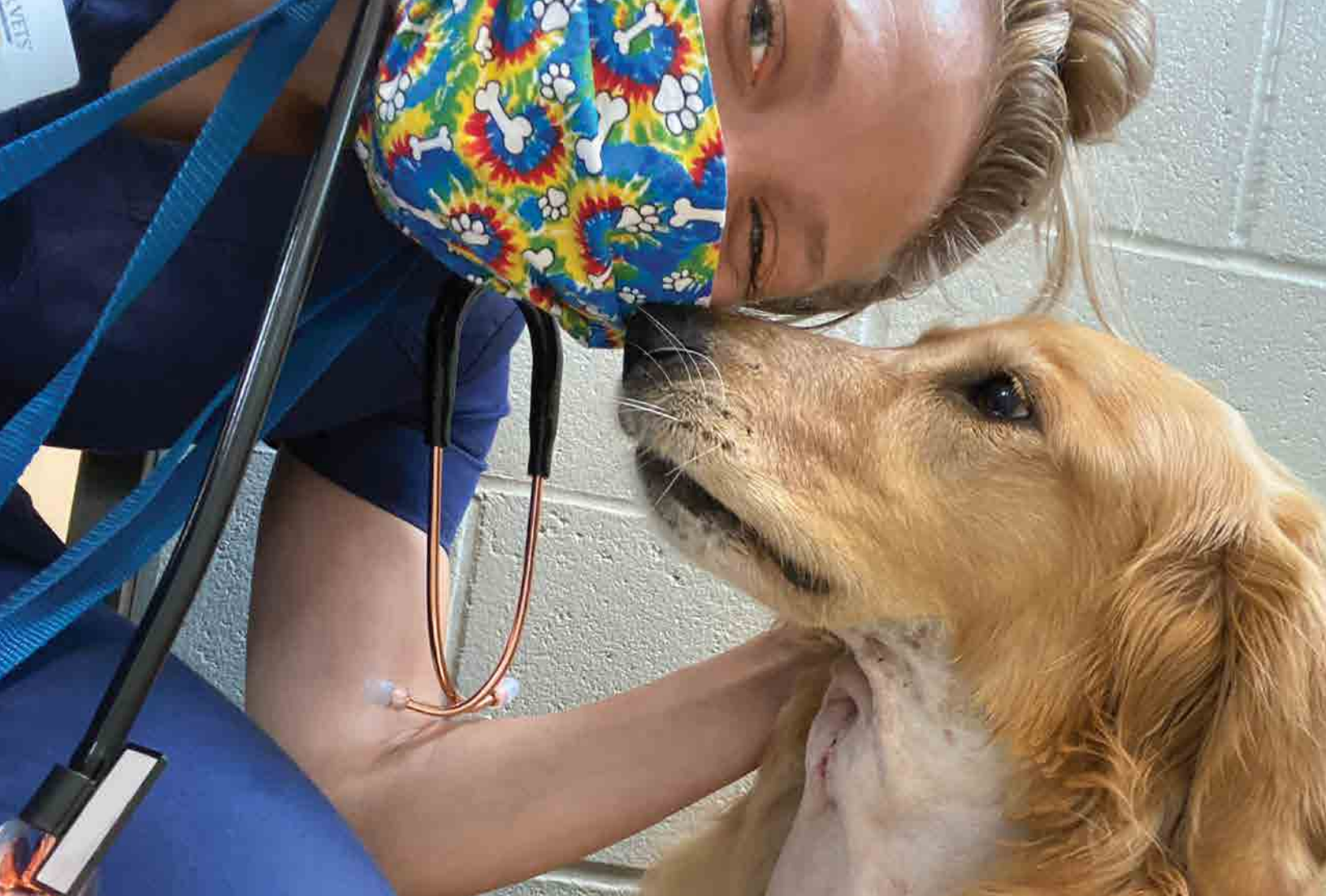
NORTHSTAR VETS®

Veterinary Emergency Trauma & Specialty Center

Leading the Way.

PURPOSE IN ACTION





YOUR PURPOSE IN ACTION

— **Daniel Stobie, DVM, MS, DACVS**
Founder and Chief of Staff

There are many qualities of our team that make me feel proud, but one stands out in particular. I am consistently amazed at how the people at NorthStar VETS® find their purpose in life and act on it— it's a deep part of our culture.

Our annual "Purpose In Action" book typically highlights all three of our hospitals' growth over the past year, but this year we've chosen to do something different. We interviewed our veterinarian team, asked them to weigh in on their secrets to success, and packaged all of those gems here for you.

If 2020 was the year of massive disruption, let's make this year one of rebirth, renewal, and reinvention. No matter how you fared in the recent past, you have a tremendous opportunity right now to look at where you are in life, the unique skills and passion you offer, and commit yourself to bringing your true purpose to bear.

It is my hope that this book finds you well and the following words inspire you to do great things starting today.



PUT PURPOSE INTO PERSPECTIVE

— **Manoel Tamassia, DVM, MS, PhD, DACT**

The universe is unfathomably old and vast. It's estimated to be around 13.8 billion years old. In this vast universe, one of the many parallel universes, scientists estimate to have 200 billion galaxies. One of those galaxies is called the Milky Way and contains 250 billion stars. One of those stars is known as Sol (Sun), a dwarf star, and is home to our solar system, which contains eight planets. One of those planets, the third rock from the Sun, is our planet Earth. Earth is home to 30 million species, 3 million that have been cataloged. One of those species is ours, the humans. The current human population on the planet today is around 7.7 billion inhabitants.

I am but one of them. So are you. These facts humble me, but one fact truly puts things into perspective and we should reflect on this for a while. Earth is the only planet we're aware of containing life.

As a veterinarian, I accept the responsibility to care for as many members of these 30 million different species as possible, because all of this life is precious. That is why I participate in the One Health initiative, a cross-functional group of doctors, veterinarians, various other scientists, and regular citizens. One Health recognizes the connection between the health of animals, people, and the environment, and my purpose in life is to recognize and keep that balance.

One Health shows that humans and animals are all interconnected in this environment. You need to approach problems, life, looking at it as a whole. This way the actions you take will have a meaningful and long-lasting impact.

This shows up in the work I do as a Theriogenologist at NorthStar VETS®, my role as the state veterinarian for New Jersey, and in my personal time when I make trips to Malawi, Africa to help villagers take better care of their farm animals.

A few years ago, Dr. Stobie asked me if I could help his church which had a branch in Malawi. They had many problems, one of which was their goats were dying. Food security and the domestication of animals and plants are vital issues. My work there gave me a new approach to the way I see life, health, and the planet. We have nothing but this one life, one health. To understand this one life that we have, we need to understand our place in the world, in the universe.

I encourage you to take a few moments and reflect on the health of our planet and all who live here, and how you can use your skills to make it a better place.



NorthStar VETS® relief team, in conjunction with Villages in Partnership®, brought animal husbandry and agricultural solutions to farming villages in Malawi, Africa.

RAISED WITH PURPOSE

Joy Weinstein, VMD, DACVS

When I was two years old, my parents let me pick out my first puppy. We were told all of the pups in the litter were male German Shepherds. Inside the puppy pen were the most rambunctious little guys I ever saw and they were jumping all over me. One of the pups was quiet and sweet. I chose him and named him Duke.

We took Duke to the local veterinary hospital for his new puppy check-up and discovered he was really a female puppy and she was pretty sick with hookworm anemia. We renamed her Duchess and she stayed at the hospital for a while to get a blood transfusion and treatment for parasites. The veterinarian became a hero figure to me because he saved my puppy. He also taught me how to determine whether a puppy was a male or female when I was less than three years old!

My parents became what we now refer to as “backyard breeders” and Duchess bore two litters of puppies. Our veterinarian and his wife came to the house to whelp them and educate my parents on proper care for the newborns. The litters were large and I loved bottle feeding them.

From the time I started interacting with our veterinarian, and Duchess became part of our family, I wanted pursue a veterinary career. We always had a dog throughout my childhood and I looked forward to going to their veterinary visits. I tried to take in a few stray cats a couple of times, but my parents always found them locked in our screened-in porch and let them back outdoors.

In my excitement to start a veterinary career, I applied to college early and skipped my last year of high school.

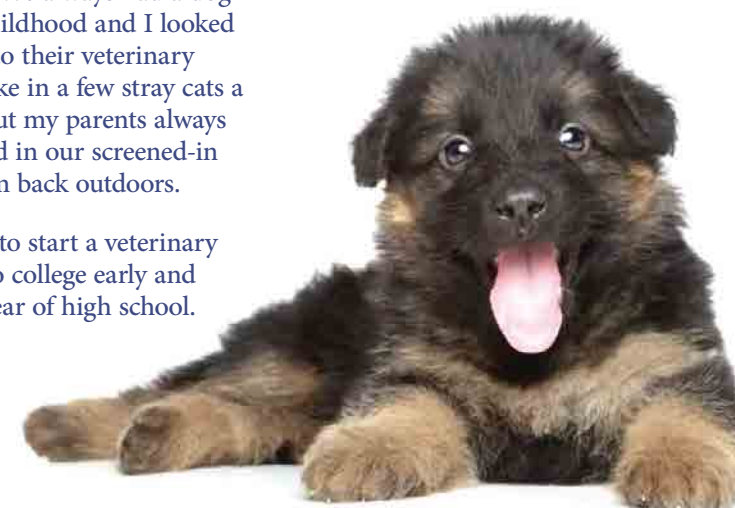


While in college, I observed at several veterinary hospitals and did volunteer work at an animal shelter near the college. Because I was wary of cats (having only grown up with dogs and was not allowed to have a cat), I asked to work only with the cats at

the shelter. I was scratched so many times while moving cats from cage to cage at first, but quickly learned to handle and appreciate them. I got my first kitten, Spooky, from that shelter and kept her in my dorm against all rules. That’s when I discovered cats are great pets for people who work long hours, and ever since college, cats have been my only pets.

I started veterinary school at the University of Pennsylvania immediately after finishing college. With a strong interest in surgery, I pursued a surgical residency after finishing veterinary school and spent one year in a small animal practice and one year in an emergency practice. I was in the right place at the right time and was able to do a residency at Tufts University and Angell Memorial Animal Hospital without a prior Internship.

I have now been a veterinarian for 37 years and I could not ever picture myself taking another career path in my life. I have always felt this is what I was meant to do because of my early childhood experiences.



FIND YOUR PURPOSE



Born Knowing

Like many veterinarians, I could always be found as a young child with neighboring animals or taking care of the farm animals my relatives had. As a result, I knew I would do something in the field due to my love for them all. Sometimes, you’re fortunate enough to just know from the start what you were put on this earth to do.



Kanika Singleton, DVM



WITH SUPPORT, I PURSUED MY PURPOSE

— *Melanie Puchot, DVM, DACVIM*

I'm the classic fairytale story of wanting to become a veterinarian. Since I was a child, I realized that dream with the help and support of family and mentors. I have always loved animals of all kinds and the unique relationship we can form with them when they are our pets. They bring so much enrichment to our lives in countless ways and the thought of nurturing that has always been my passion. Fortunately, I went to college at a university that had a veterinary school which allowed me to surround myself with mentorship. When I finished my training, I searched for a hospital that would feel like home and colleagues who would feel like friends. I was willing to travel outside the great Lone Star state and found myself at NorthStar VETS® because of the community of doctors and deep connections with the community here. It has been a wonderful place to fulfill my childhood dream which was nurtured so well during my youth.

Following My Purpose Meant Leaving Home

— *Nathalie Paiva, DVM*



There was no clear moment when I decided to become a veterinarian, but like many in my profession, I loved animals from a very young age and always had an interest in science. In high school, I started to shadow at a veterinary hospital and soon realized there was nothing else I would spend my life doing. The journey to becoming one soon proved to be fraught with challenges for me, especially growing up in a large city with a high crime rate and fewer opportunities. Born and raised in Newark, NJ, I was a city girl, riding the subway to my high school classes. My exposure to animals in this city environment was non-existent, the police horses

were the only real animals I saw. It was for this reason I took the limited college-level classes offered at my high school and enrolled at Rutgers University Cook College, where I experienced what it was like to work with large animals. Ultimately, I found my passion working in small animal medicine, where I saw what the bond between animals and people could be like and how I could make an impact.



LOSS BROUGHT ME PURPOSE

— *Timothy Ericksen, DVM*



Growing up, I always cared for animals and gravitated toward science. When I was young, I wanted to be a doctor for humans, but that changed the day I experienced the loss of a pet. I was about 12 when my family rescued a Doberman with whom I immediately fell in love. After a few months with us, she suffered a leg injury and was put to sleep because she wasn't able to walk and had a poor quality of life. After that loss, I decided to help as many people and pets as possible from going through that situation and focused my studies on becoming a veterinarian. My pain made my calling clear to me.

MY FANTASY BECAME MY LIFELONG PURPOSE

— *Kimberly Hammer, VMD, DACVIM*



I was the typical young girl who read James Herriot and loved horses. I thought that getting up at 2 AM and delivering a calf while receiving payment in fresh eggs was the most wonderful idea. That all changed in 6th grade when I had to do a career report. My best friend chose the career I wanted, which was a horse trainer. I chose the next best thing, which was large animal veterinarian. For the report, we had to interview someone in our career field. I interviewed Dr. Harry Werner, an equine veterinarian in my area. He offered to take me on house calls with him where I fell in love with the profession. I entered veterinary school interested in equine medicine, but ultimately made the transition into small animal medicine. It took some time, but I found my path by the time I was a young adult.



Honesty With Myself Revealed My Purpose

— *Joanna Lloyd, VMD*

I originally planned to go into biology/microbiology research and I even worked in a lab for a year doing research on genes

associated with Autism. In the last month of college, everything changed. That's when I rescued a baby squirrel from another student who had "rescued" (kidnapped) it. I love nurturing things, but I think Squirrely is the first animal I truly raised. He had a successful soft release into the wild that summer.

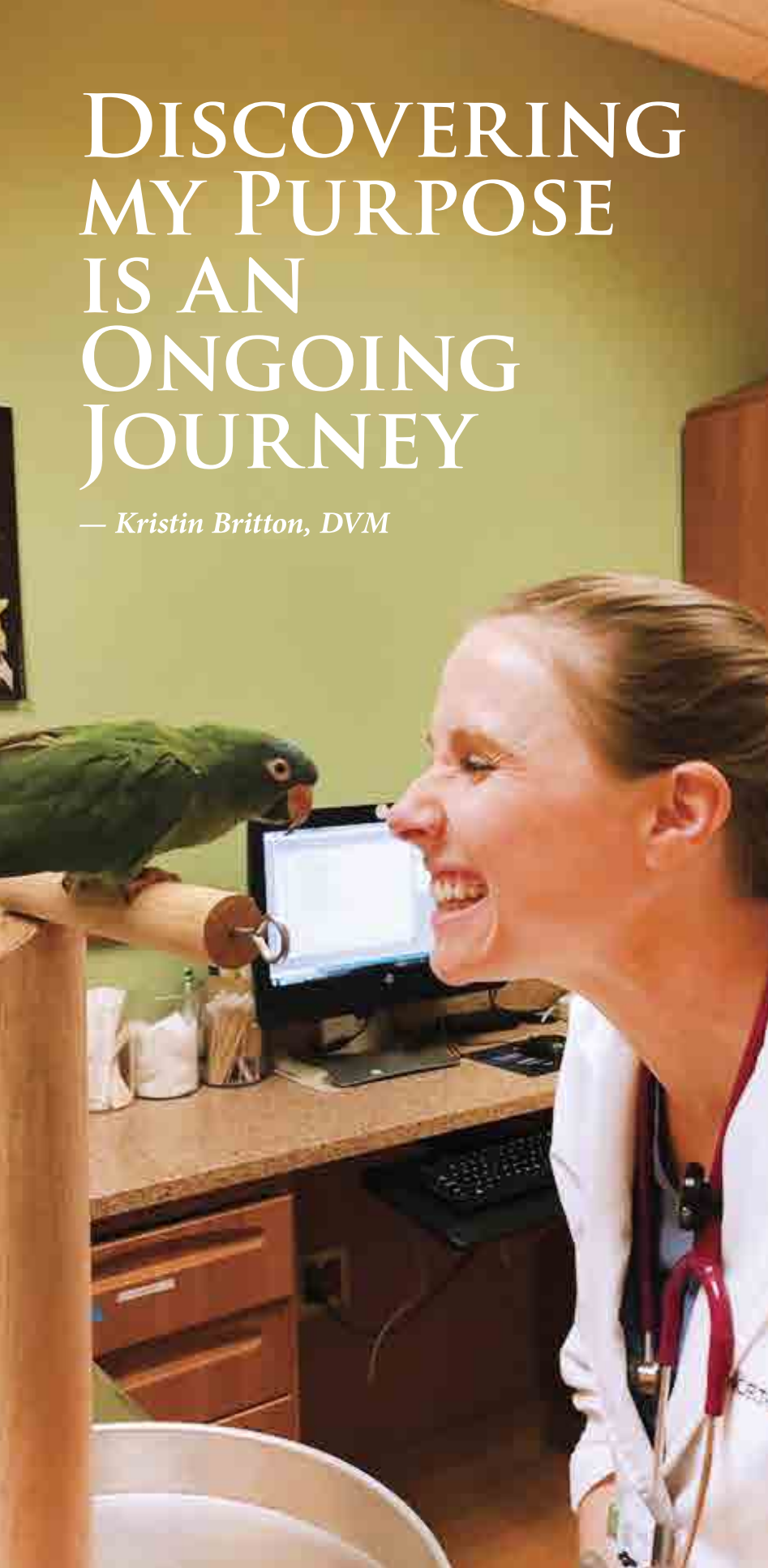


While I was working in the lab, I started volunteering at a wildlife rehabilitation center and two animal shelters. I spent most of my free time working with animals and growing my menagerie at home. A year into my work, when it was time to look for graduate programs, I was really uninspired. My extended family had been suggesting veterinary school for ages because all my updates at home were about some new animal, but I felt that I should have known as a child if I wanted to be a veterinarian.

I thought about it for a while and realized it was a great way to combine my love of science, medicine, and working with animals. I moved home and actually went to veterinary technician school first. The goals there were to get experience, make sure I could handle the gross and sad parts of veterinary medicine, and make sure I had the manual dexterity needed. I LOVED it, especially my emergency rotations and knew when I finished, I wanted to work in emergency medicine. I worked for a year as a technician at an emergency specialty clinic in Pennsylvania while I took my pre-veterinary prerequisite courses that I hadn't taken in undergrad. From there, I went to veterinary school, did a rotating internship, and have been a full-time emergency veterinarian ever since.

DISCOVERING MY PURPOSE IS AN ONGOING JOURNEY

— Kristin Britton, DVM



“The path to becoming a veterinarian was a gradual and winding one for me.”

My 6th grade yearbook says I wanted to be a veterinarian, however, this wasn't always my goal. My real dream back then was working with marine life as a marine biologist. My journey began at the University of Hawaii in Hilo to do just that. Later, I did an internship at the Alaska Sea Life Center in Seward, Alaska. The aquarium allowed cross-training in other departments, so after my regular shift in the aquatics department, I worked in the rehabilitation center. This was my first exposure to veterinary medicine helping nurse seals, birds, otters, and a walrus back to health. My senior year, I took a 400-level class in animal science to mix things up, Animal Parasites and Diseases with Dr. Almond. I didn't know anyone in the class, and they didn't know where this marine scientist came from, but I gave unique presentations about sea turtles and their infectious diseases. This led to my senior thesis studying fibropapilloma tumors in Hawaiian green sea turtles. That's when I fell in love with animal diseases!

After earning my undergraduate degree, I applied to the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California. Turns out you need a little more experience than just a bachelors degree to land a job there, so I volunteered with their sea otter research and conservation group, SORAC. Working closely with rehabilitation and veterinary staff there landed me a job at an exotics-only practice in town owned by Dr. Mike Murray.

I worked as an assistant there with three amazing exotics veterinarians and soaked up knowledge like a sponge. There were animals to which I had never been exposed before. X-rays, anesthesia, treatments, medications, proper handling, and the ins-and-outs of husbandry became my normal day.

Life then took me to Augusta, Georgia where I worked as a veterinary technician for four years. Augusta didn't have any exotic animal veterinary hospitals, so I worked with dogs, cats, and the occasional exotic pet at a multi-doctor primary care and emergency hospital. Too many people there told me to become a veterinarian, and so I finally took the plunge!

I attended Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine in St. Kitts, West Indies. Veterinary school was one of the hardest things I ever did, but I gained the knowledge/skills needed to become the doctor I am today. I worked with the St. Kitts Sea Turtle Monitoring Network studying nesting Leatherback Sea Turtles, as well as tagging loggerhead, green, olive ridley, and hawksbill sea turtles. I also worked with Barbados Black Belly sheep, donkeys, cows, horses, dogs, cats, and a multitude of parrots. My clinical year took me to Kansas State University where I met Dr. James Carpenter, who encouraged me to fulfill my new dream of working with exotic and zoological animals. It was an incredible year full of unexpected experiences like the Dodge City Rodeo, necropsying an anteater, treating a sick camel, and working with one of the Budweiser Clydesdale horses. I also had incredible externship experiences at the Georgia Sea Turtle Center, Sea World Orlando, and Denver Zoo to finish the year.

My journey with exotics didn't stop after becoming a licensed veterinarian. I interned three-times over at a specialty and emergency center in Torrance California, the Wildlife Center of Virginia, and the Western College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon. I worked with everything from owls, eagles, bears, rabbits, song birds, snapping turtles, frogs, parrots, ferrets, hedgehogs, bison, hawks, prairie dogs, wolves, elk, deer, cougars, goats, monkeys, and so many more. I also got to extern at the Vancouver Aquarium where a sea otter I raised as a pup years before in Alaska was back in my life as an adult in Canada. At the Avian and Exotic Center in Bedford Hills, NY, my residency took me into a whole new field of exotic parrots, wild avian species and a wide variety of exotic pets to open up a wider knowledge base and further my skills.

To this day, my learning journey hasn't stopped. Once you become a veterinarian, the journey is just beginning. You are always learning, always attaining new skills, always reaching for more ways to help various types of animals. It's an exciting path to travel, one I'm happy to keep exploring.



My Purpose Came From Sheer Determination

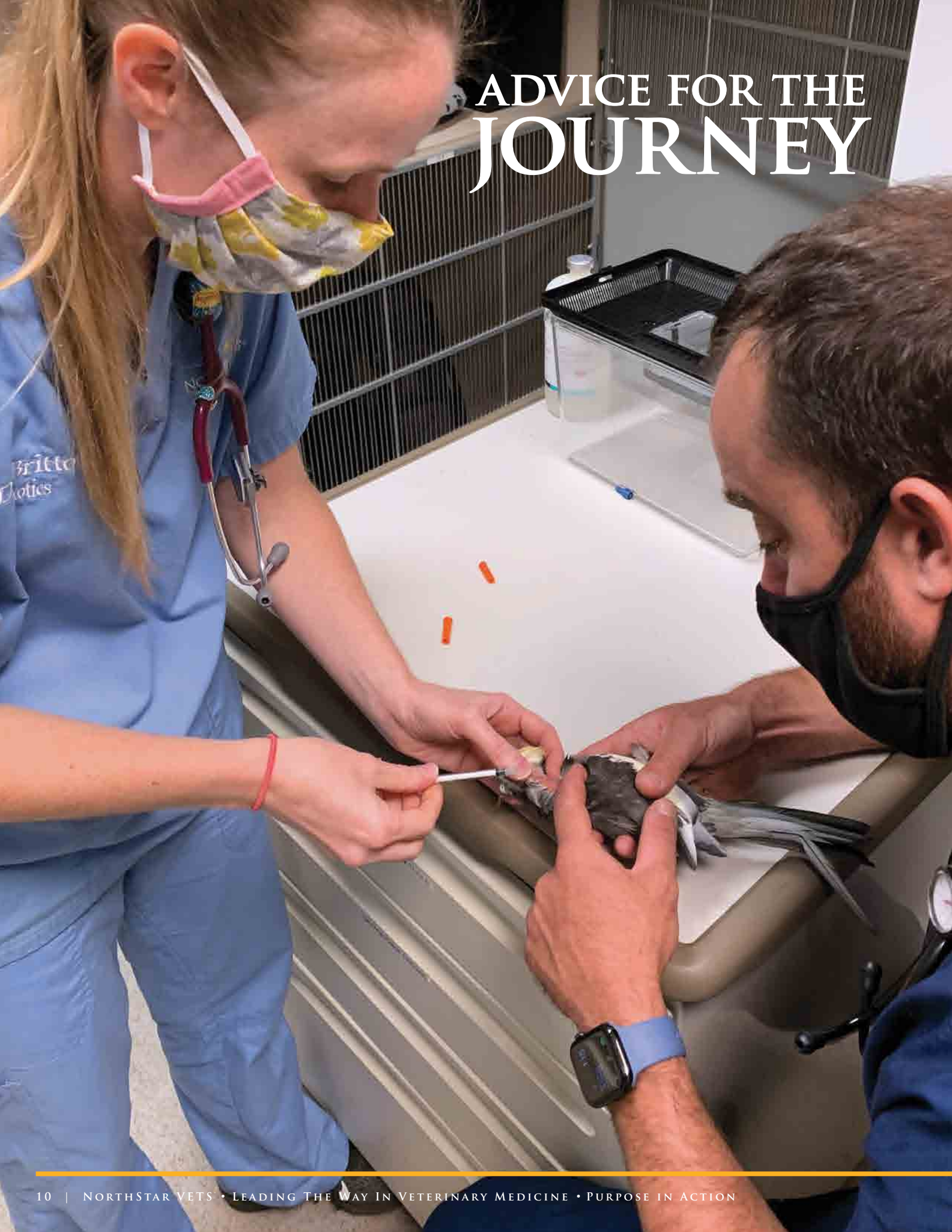
— Victoria Goodman, BVM&S, MRCVS



The truth is, I was a high school wash-out. With no qualifications, I started my career as a janitor in a DIY store in my hometown of Worcester, England. One day, a visit to my local veterinarian changed everything. Whilst there with one of my own pets, I was told I should get a job as a veterinary nurse. Despite not taking it seriously, I looked into it. The more I researched, the more I realised I was genuinely interested. More-so, I wanted to be the veterinary surgeon, rather than the nurse, making decisions and fixing problems.

With the absolutely mad goal of becoming a veterinarian, I went back to school. I started from the beginning by completing my high school certificates, then progressing to advanced level qualifications. After three years of catching up, I was accepted to school in Scotland to study for a veterinary degree. I was the first person in my family to go to university. Six years later, I graduated. It was a bumpy ride even then, but it was grit and force of will that got me through. That same stubbornness is what gets me through most things in life!





ADVICE FOR THE JOURNEY

BE BRAVE

— *Kristin Britton, DVM*

In my particular line of work, I treat a greater variety of species than most of my colleagues. In my career at NorthStar VETS®, I get to pioneer new procedures like blood transfusions in bearded dragons, chemotherapy protocols for ferrets, and surgically creating new ligamental knee support for a turkey. I am fortunate to work closely with the other doctors of our Avian and Exotics Service. We share information, collaborate with veterinarians in different specialties from Behavior to Surgery, and network with other doctors like me across the country and around the globe, focused on building the knowledge base to better care for our avian and exotic patients.

Working in a newer area of medicine like this takes courage, and is the result of believing in my purpose. I have always gravitated toward species other than dogs, cats and farm animals with every step of my career leading me to this point. By now, I have treated dozens of different species of animals from the smallest of voles to large whales.

Sometimes finding your purpose requires you to leave “the normal” where you’re comfortable and take a big step out. The world needs people who blaze new trails for us all and for the unique animals around us. I encourage you to be bold when bringing your unique self to the world, try something new, and you may just find your passion and purpose too.



Know What You Want

— *Kimberly Hammer, VMD, DACVIM*



When considering your ideal place in life, like a job, think deeply about what is most important to you (for a veterinarian, that might be a good schedule, salary, certain equipment, other specialties, private practice vs. national network, location, etc.). Just know you’ll not likely find one opportunity that meets all your criteria, so know how to weigh the importance of each factor. In keeping with the career example, if you are an experienced professional in need of a change, try to change things where you are first. If that doesn’t work, leave on good terms. Most people do not stay at their first job for many reasons. I worked at two different hospitals before finding my place at NorthStar VETS. Having learned through experience what is important to me, I’ve been happy now for 13 years and counting!



Align Your Values

— *Nathalie Paiva, DVM*

Veterinary school is a journey that only those who have been through can understand, and I could not have asked for a better first job right out of school. It is humbling to realize that despite the massive amount of information I learned in school, there is still so much more to know. I was fortunate to have great mentorship and a diverse caseload, but decided I enjoyed emergency medicine best. I referred many clients to NorthStar VETS® and even took my own cat in for specialty care. My clients had wonderful things to say about them and I confirmed these experiences during my externship there. NorthStar VETS® stands for the same values I stand for as a veterinarian and it is a place to continue expanding my knowledge while serving people and pets.

Adapt and Learn

— *Kanika Singleton, DVM*



Like anyone who strives to do their work well, you will eventually come to a point where you understand that your profession, life, and everything else is ever-changing. Success in life means being adaptable and always learning.

PURSUE YOUR PURPOSE

— Tammy Anderson, DVM, DACVIM

My mother became a nurse in 1959 because she wanted to work for a veterinarian down the road who she found out would hire a nurse in his office. She always wanted to be a veterinarian, but back then, women didn't really pursue careers like that. It wasn't until the day I finished veterinary school that she shared this part of her past with me.

I still remember that day. There was a white coat ceremony where we gave our oaths as veterinarians. I was walking down the aisle and I saw she was weeping like a baby. Afterwards, I asked, "Mom, what was that about?" and that's when she revealed to me, "I always wanted to be a veterinarian." More than twenty years later, I still carry that story with me and know it means the world to my mom to see both our dreams fulfilled. When you sense your purpose in life and that feeling stays with you, it is always worth pursuing. **A dream deferred is disappointing, but a purpose fulfilled improves your life.**



SURROUND YOURSELF WITH DIVERSITY

— Kimberly Hammer, VMD, DACVIM

What others bring to the table is something I have come to appreciate over the course of my career. When I graduated from veterinary school, I thought "I'm a doctor, I know everything!" As time went on through my internship, residency, and in clinical practice, I was humbled every day by the knowledge of others. I realized that I didn't know everything, and in fact every day there is something new to learn. One of the reasons I like working in a comprehensive practice like NorthStar VETS® is because everybody brings all of their knowledge together to benefit patients and clients. I learn something new every day and this fact has spread to other parts of my life. **Every person has knowledge and experience different from mine and it is important to always listen and learn.**

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

— Timothy Ericksen, DVM

I've helped many patients at this point in my career, but I will always remember saving "Sneakers". Sneakers was a wonderful little cat who came in with a large wound in her armpit after getting a leg stuck in her collar. Initially, the wound wasn't healing appropriately and the client was considering euthanasia to relieve her pet. I convinced her to give me one last attempt to save Sneakers. She said "yes," and the wound eventually closed a few weeks later. This pet parent was immensely grateful and Sneakers went on to live a full life. In that moment, **I felt overwhelming pride, happiness, and most importantly confidence that I had the skills needed to help my patients live long, happy lives.**



IMPACT OTHERS' LIVES

— Daniel Stobie, DVM, MS, DACVS

As veterinarians, we get to do what we love every day, interacting with people and pets. Probably the most rewarding thing is seeing a pet that is really connected to its person and their person is connected to them. When they're really sick with a not-so-good prognosis, but we take that pet, fix them, get them well, it means so much to see them healthy again and that joy on the client's face when they're reunited with their pet. That is the most rewarding thing about this job.

There's one case from a couple years ago like that for me. There was this little dog that came in with swelling in his inguinal area (his groin). It turned out he had an incarcerated hernia. The dog was very sick, the intestine was being strangled, and we had to do emergency surgery. We went in and removed that damaged part of the intestine and then hooked everything back up.

What I didn't know at the time was that the woman who took care of this dog was wheelchair-bound. This dog was her constant companion and she was lost without him. He would ride around with her in the wheelchair and retrieve items. Getting this service dog well and returning him to his owner was vitally important. **I find this facet of veterinary medicine very rewarding and it makes the hard days, worthwhile.**





FINDING HER PURPOSE

— **Rosalie LoScrudato**
DVM, CVA, CCRP



PURPOSE CAN FEEL PREDESTINED

If you ask my parents, they will tell you I was destined to be a veterinarian. Even as a young child, animals were everything to me, which is funny because my parents were not “animal people.” I credit my love of animals to my Sicilian roots. My paternal grandfather had many donkeys and mules, my maternal relatives are very agriculturally rooted, and my younger cousin in Sicily is also a veterinarian! I keep a cherished photo of myself in Sicily, when I was about 18 months old sitting with a bunny, looking as if I am doing a physical exam. I truly never thought of doing anything else, and believe there are things in life you are simply meant to do. **For me, I was meant to be a veterinarian.**

EVERY LIFE EXPERIENCE BUILDS YOU

Losing my own horse was devastating, but taught me so much as a young veterinarian. My horse was my soul, a sentiment that resonates with many horse owners. When one of her hind limbs was injured and subsequently treated for 3 long months at an equine specialty practice, and just when we thought she would be

okay, she deteriorated and I had to euthanize her. That day, I learned that even if you are in it for the long haul, even if you accept that the things you wanted to accomplish and share with that pet might not happen, even if you alter those visions, and even if you spend your last dime to get your pet better, sometimes it isn't meant to be. Despite everyone working hard, the outcome is the horrible loss of that beloved pet. Experiencing that deep emotional loss gives insight that you can call on later when interacting with clients in similar situations. You truly do understand the devastation they feel with the loss of that family member.

A lyric from one of my favorite performers is “nothing stays the same but change,” and an important lesson is that your life experiences make you a better person when they give you understanding of others.

Now, after a career spanning three decades and counting in several different aspects of veterinary medicine from general practice to emergency medicine and physical rehabilitation and pain management, I have many experiences with pets and clients. Every day, I help them the MOST that I can. That is my goal for every patient I see. **The cases where you work your hardest and do your best, but feel you can't help, are the pets that leave the deepest marks on your heart.**



Dr. LoScrudato With Rabbit (Sicily, Italy)

HAVE THE RIGHT TOOLS

— **Veronica Jones, DVM**

TV programs like “Emergency Vets” and “The Jeff Corwin Experience” piqued my childhood interest in caring for animals. Since then, all I ever talked about was becoming a veterinarian; it seemed so straight-forward. After finishing undergrad, I worked in the field as a veterinary assistant for three years, which solidified my interest in veterinary school. I've learned a lot since then, but the biggest lesson I carry with me today is that nothing is ever “by the book.” School taught me what to expect, but while some cases are simple, others are more complicated, especially in emergency medicine. Today, it's a combination of knowledge and problem-solving experience that provide the best treatments for my patients. **This is why wisdom, understanding, and sound judgment are the most important tools at my disposal.**



SEEK DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

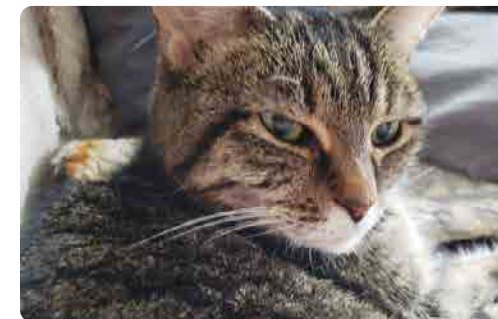
— **Urshulaa Dholakia**
DVM, MPH, DACLAM, DACVAA

Veterinarians are trained to make decisions based on the facts. During my first internship after vet school, a veterinarian transferred a case to me. It was a 21-year-old cat with a lung tumor in need of a surgical and/or medicine consultation that was also oxygen-dependent, had a thin body condition, and was on palliative medications. The client was a young man, also around 21 years old. My colleagues felt euthanasia was the best option for this cat, and I felt the same until I spoke with the client.

In that conversation, it became clear that something else was happening, and he was not emotionally ready to let go of his pet. I placed the cat in the oxygen cage and continued palliative care, then spoke to the surgeons, called various oncologists, and updated the client that his only option was to set up an oxygen cage in his home. He immediately made preparations to obtain one. When in oxygen, the cat seemed normal, eating and drinking, grooming, and not in pain. Still, many in the hospital continued to question whether this was a humane thing to do to keep the cat going.

When the client's home was set up, he came back to pick up his pet and asked to speak with me. He thanked me profusely for my patience and calm understanding and then told me his mother was suffering from the same condition, a primary lung carcinoma. He had this cat his entire life, and his mother was also fighting for her life. He couldn't give up on anyone in his family as long as it seemed reasonable, especially while his cat was still eating and drinking on her own.

He was a private young man, and said nothing about his mother until 3-4 days later, and only to me. He tolerated many blunt and uncomfortable conversations with other clinicians at the hospital seeking his approval to euthanize. **It was then I realized there is always more to the story than we know, and getting that deeper level of understanding can shift our entire perspective.**



Be Humble

The most important lesson I've learned in life is that it is okay to say “I don't know.” People respect confidence and honesty, which go a long way in building rapport. The more you learn, the more you realize how much you still don't know.

Learn When To Let Go

The clients I may have helped the most never went home with their pets. Euthanasia is one of the most critically important parts of my job to get right, and the most impactful moments are often when I've delivered bad news and gave them peace of mind in saying goodbye. Comforting and supporting people during a difficult decision is something in which I will always take pride.

Learn From Animals

I am constantly astounded at the resiliency and forgiving nature of pets. Many patients over the years touched my heart after suffering horrible injuries and illnesses, but still gave kisses and held no grudges. **Humans could learn something from that.**



— **Stacey Rebello, w, MS**



KEEP A LEVEL HEAD

— Kristina Vygantas, DVM, DACVO



A few short weeks after graduating from veterinary school, I started the internship program at Auburn University's College of Veterinary Medicine where I learned many important lessons. I was similar to many young graduates, full of technical medical knowledge, but lacking the finesse to manage the people and pets behind the medicine.

On one of my first days, I was working as the primary emergency veterinarian when a very self-assured gentleman brought his dog to see us for acting lethargic and acting "not quite right." He was very demanding about how we were to treat his pet, which professors we should contact with diagnostic results, and the timetable we needed

to follow. My emotions were an instant mix of nervousness and bravado. Who was he to tell us how to run the hospital? I started the pet's exam by kneeling down to listen to its heart while the client kept her on a very short leash. While listening through the stethoscope, I realized my head was eye level with the client's waist and then noticed he had forgotten to zip his pants! Given the man's blustery manner, I wanted to point this fact out and re-assert control of the exam room. Fortunately, I paused to regain my composure and decided to keep this unwelcome news to myself. Focusing on the dog's medical needs, it was clear her blood sugar was dangerously low and she needed immediate care to prevent her from seizing.

We managed the pet overnight and learned the next day that she had a tumor on her pancreas causing her to secrete excessive amounts of insulin which lead to severely low blood sugar. The client was very complimentary of my care and the pet was referred internally to our oncology service. I later learned that this man was a major benefactor to the veterinary college and ended up making a large donation in his pet's name to the hospital. How different things would be if I had lost my composure!

I learned that day, and in many clinical situations after, that it is always best to be professional, even if someone isn't the most agreeable from the start!



Expect Curves In The Road

— Benjamin Donati, VMD

My original plan was to go to law school. As I was finishing college, a family friend (in veterinary school at the time) described his experience and it sounded so rewarding. I read about the profession, spent time with veterinarians in various settings, and went back to school to complete the required courses for entrance to vet school. This experience taught me the most important lesson. **In life and medicine, not everything follows in a linear fashion.** You don't always find a good explanation for what's in front of you. Veterinary school prepares you to think medically. More importantly, it prepares you to think critically. This is not a challenge to be overcome, but rather, to be embraced and worked on all the time.

Earn It And Own It

— Kristin Britton, DVM



It was strange to hear people call me "Doctor" Britton on my first day as a veterinarian. Nobody called me that before in the veterinary settings I worked as a technician or assistant, and I tried not to smile too big or giggle when someone said my name.

That day, I saw a large breed dog who had just come back after hiking with his owner through the California hills. He was sneezing excessively, pawing at his face, and seemed very uncomfortable. It felt like I was reading an exam question that sets you up with all the right clues to come to the conclusion of a single simple answer. In school I learned that grass awns will commonly get stuck up dog's noses after being outside in the west coast. They will sneeze excessively to try to clear the grass awn, but due to its shape they won't be able to. So there I stood in a veterinary exam room in Torrance, California, seeing a condition that was notorious for the area on my very first day. I quickly created a sedation protocol and plan to get the grass awn out of that big nose. With some special equipment and the help of my technicians, the procedure went smoothly, the dog was no longer in discomfort, and he went home later that day. I saved the grass awn for the clients and took a picture of it covered in shiny mucus. **I felt confident that I had the knowledge and tools to be able to make quick decisions, do this job well, and own that title of "Doctor."**



You Are Not Alone

— Victoria Goodman, BVM&S, MRCVS

No one is ever truly alone. Even when a client thinks they're working exclusively with one veterinarian, there's invariably a contributing team behind the scenes. It's often those un-sung souls who make-or-break recovery for the sicker patients. This also holds true for the veterinary team. Too many in our profession struggle with isolation and loneliness. Often, all that needs to happen is to acknowledging the others around us. A smile or a quiet word makes all the difference. **Strife is inevitable, but enduring it alone is entirely avoidable when we show compassion.**

When I was still working in general practice, I was the weekend Vet on-Call. A client asked that I come to her house to euthanize her dog. He had lymphoma and was now suffering. When I arrived, I found the client sitting on the couch with her dog whilst saying goodbye. Sadly, she explained how there was nothing left. Her entire family had passed and she relied solely on her dog, who served faithfully as an assistance animal. She struggled around the home to perform simple things like getting in and out of bed.

I wasn't comfortable leaving the woman alone after her pet was gone, so I made a cup of tea for both of us and put together a small meal. After I left the home, I called a social worker and doctor's office to make sure that someone would help her. I contacted a charity that pairs shelter animals with the disabled elderly. In the days and weeks after, a nurse made regular visits to the woman's house, and a charity introduced the old woman to another dog that was as desperate as she for a new friend.

You have to care to cure loneliness. You have to care about your patients, your clients, your colleagues, and perhaps most importantly, yourself. We see patients and clients on some of the worst days of their lives. We often move on as clinicians, but leave lasting impressions on those who turn to us for help. No matter who you are, showing compassion is everything.





MY MENTOR FOUGHT FOR MY PURPOSE

— Stacey Rebello, DVM, MS



Like most veterinarians, I was the kid who fed the animals at the petting zoo, left milk outside for neighborhood kittens, and pet every dog that walked by me on the street. From childhood, I wanted to be a veterinarian, and only briefly considered alternative careers in law (I like to argue), gerontology (I like old people), and becoming a physician's assistant. In undergrad, I was a pre-med student, and later got a master's degree in equine theriogenology under the tutelage of my mentor, Dr. Margo Macpherson, who single-handedly got me into vet school. When I wasn't accepted upon finishing my master's thesis, she marched into the Dean of Admissions' office and said "If we aren't accepting students like Stacey, then we need to seriously reconsider our acceptance criteria." My acceptance letter showed up shortly thereafter, and I am forever grateful to her.



ALWAYS HELP OTHERS

— Kirk Herrmann, DVM
(Practice Limited to Dentistry and Oral Surgery)

Our relationships with others influence their decisions, which became even more evident to me the time I saw a young dog with extreme oral pain. The client was a diligent and wonderful caretaker and came to us as soon as he identified there was a problem. I diagnosed his pet with a chronic ulcerative disorder in his mouth and the treatment would require extensive extractions. Because of the effort he put into his companion's care, he was blindsided by the news. Fortunately, the relationship we had built over time allowed me to explain to him that this was not something he could have prevented and was a fixable problem. He trusted me to get his dog better despite the unexpected diagnosis. It was difficult at first for him to understand the problem and ultimate solution, but in the end was very happy with his decision. **No matter your profession or role, you will be called at times to guide others, a most important responsibility we all have to each other.**



DON'T DWELL ON LOSSES

— Timothy Ericksen, DVM

The single biggest challenge I face is not taking the job home with me. During each shift, I work as hard as possible to treat every patient to the best of my ability. In spite of that, there are patients that do not make it regardless of my best efforts. It's tempting to rehash what more I could have done, but that kind of thinking takes a toll. I remind myself that many more patients do amazing and leave the hospital with their families.

USE YOUR EXPERIENCE

— Joanna Lloyd, VMD

The case that has changed my outlook on purpose the most was the illness and death of my own dog. It made me more interested in **hospice and palliative care and shaped the way I talk about quality of life with clients.** Because I understand, I help pet parents struggling with the decision to euthanize. On the flip side, I made a lot of great saves over the years, and one case that exemplifies this is a parvo puppy I took care of at my first job. She had a rough go of it, but pulled through in the end. She was adopted after the family suffered a tragedy and her survival was particularly rewarding for all of us. These experiences create nuances to how I approach my purpose in life.



TAKE CALCULATED RISKS

— Melanie Puchot, DVM, DACVIM



Being a veterinarian is not always easy but it is always worth it. No one can prepare you for all of the aspects of the job that go beyond medicine – counselor, therapist, financial advisor, grief counselor, etc. We all feel at times that we don't have enough in us to rise to the task, and we also feel the heartbreak seen in this line of work. But then, just when we need it most, we see that case where we have to take a risk and it changes our entire outlook. I have been touched like this by so many of my patients and clients, and it is truly what keeps me going.

In residency, I saw a dachshund with severe megaesophagus where her throat and esophagus were dangerously enlarged. She couldn't keep food down and was wasting away. We took a drastic measure and put a permanent feeding tube in her, bypassing her enlarged esophagus. I warned the client this may impact her quality of life, but little did I know it would benefit all of ours. This dog flourished! She gained weight, started playing, and wore her Texas Aggie cheerleading outfits to games again! The pet parent and I managed her condition together for years and in turn became close. It was remarkable to see her attitude and demeanor change as her fur-baby's did. This case showed me just how closely we are linked to our pets. We feel sick when they do, will do anything take care of them, and feel joy when they feel better, but **we can only get those gains when we're willing to do something big.**



HEED YOUR CALLING

— *Lacey Rosenberg, DVM, DACT*

I'm one of those rare people who, when asked as a child "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I always answered that I wanted to become a Veterinarian, then actually ended up pursuing that career path. From a very young age, I knew that I loved animals, but as a young adult I learned that wasn't enough — to successfully pursue a career in veterinary medicine, one must also have an appreciation for science. Fortunately, I did also love science, so I naturally pursued the journey that had been set before me, applied for Veterinary School shortly after college, was accepted, and after four years, proudly earned my Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine that I had dreamed about since I was small.

I'm frequently asked why I pursued advanced training to specialize in Theriogenology (Veterinary Reproduction), since my specialty is not common in small animal medicine. Reproduction was also something I happened to be drawn to. I grew up on a small ranch with many pets and was involved in my local 4H club. Throughout my childhood we had puppies, kittens, goat kids, baby rabbits, and even a foal born, all of which I was involved in to some degree. I then studied Dairy Science in college, much of which involved the science of reproduction. At the same time, my family started breeding Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, and I learned more about veterinary reproduction. By the time I applied to vet school, I knew I wanted to practice with a focus on small animal reproduction. During my internship, while working with doctors in other specialties (Oncology, Internal Medicine, and Surgery), and seeing their depth of knowledge, I realized I didn't just want to practice with a special interest, but I wanted to be a specialist. That is what inspired me to pursue residency training in Theriogenology and ultimately become a Theriogenologist.

MAKE FRIENDS

— *Alexandra Crooks, DVM*
(Practice Limited to Cardiology)

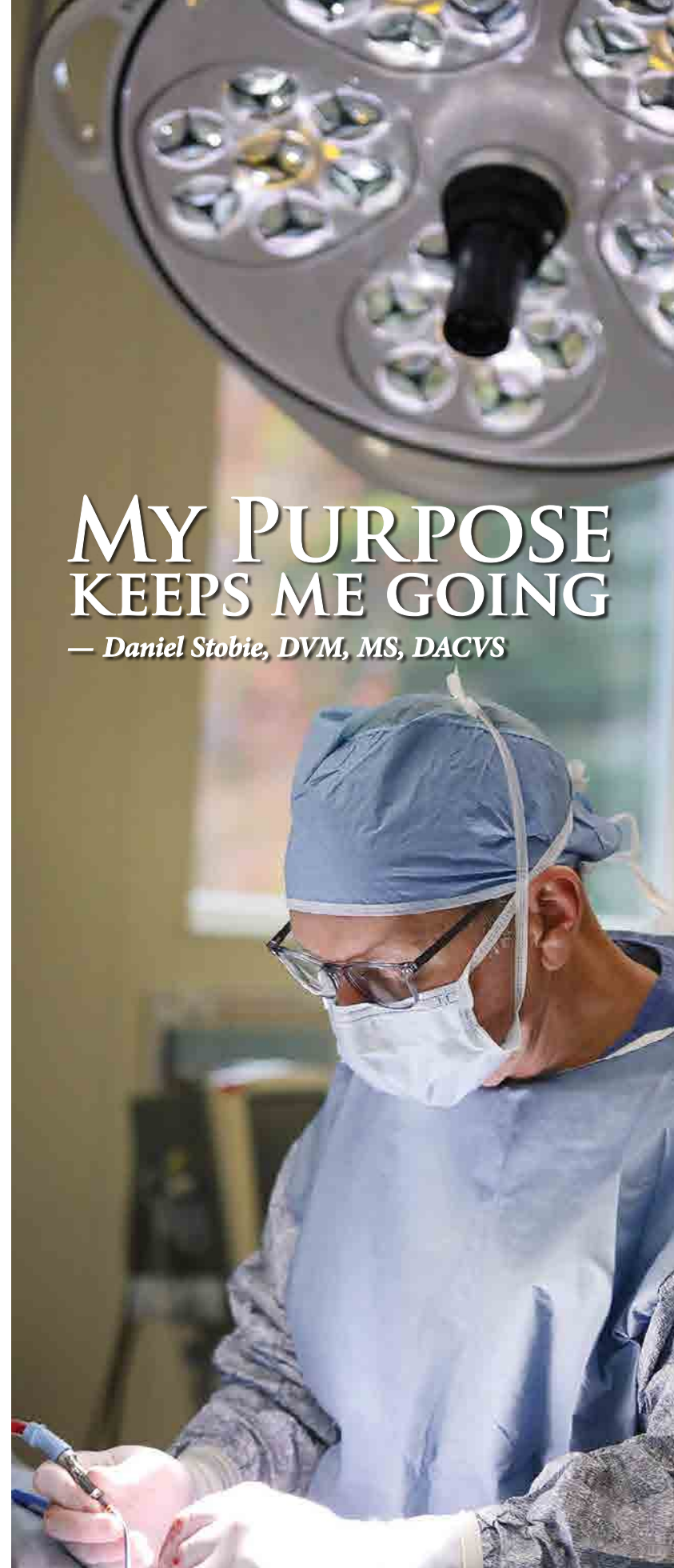


It's amazing the ideas that come from unexpected places, especially when we put effort into networking with diverse people. This truth became clear to me during my cardiology residency at the University of Pennsylvania. I participated in a research project aimed at exploring novel treatment options, including catheter ablation for Boxers with ventricular arrhythmias. Because ablation has not been widely performed or evaluated in small animal patients, this project required collaboration with our colleagues at the human hospital. I was inspired by the dedication of my clients as well as their trust in our medical team, and realized that making advances in medicine requires not only thinking outside of the box, but persistence, faith, and the right mix of people. **We achieve more when we listen and work together with people outside our immediate circle.**

KNOW THE REAL GOAL

— *Adam Miller, DVM*
(Practice Limited to Internal Medicine)

Digging for concrete answers in life isn't always necessary or possible. This is sometimes difficult for a puzzle-solver like me to accept, but I learned that some mysteries don't need to be solved when you have the right goal. During my residency, I was presented with an incredibly nice dog with a very uncommon and incurable disease. Despite our efforts, we were not able to cure him, or even reach a definitive diagnosis, but we did give him two wonderful additional years. **Often, the goal isn't to get the "answer," but to improve another's quality of life.** When you keep a noble goal like that in view, you can achieve what truly matters.



MY PURPOSE KEEPS ME GOING

— *Daniel Stobie, DVM, MS, DACVS*

Recently I was asked why I chose to be a doctor. The truth is, I've always wanted to become a veterinarian and I can't remember wanting to do anything else. Since I was a child, I've had a deep love and affinity for animals. Much to my mother's chagrin, I was constantly bringing home stray kittens, injured birds, and even once, a snake. I loved biology and science and had a strong fascination with medicine and how the body works — veterinary medicine just seemed to meld all of my interests and passions into one perfect career.

My first job in high school was with Dr. Amy Miller, a small animal veterinarian in my home town. She was a perfectionist and tough to work for, but taught me a tremendous amount. Although she never expressed her feelings, I know she was proud of me. On the day I got accepted into veterinary school, she gifted me a sculpture of a boy looking at his dog entitled "First Meeting", by the artist Dee Crowley. This was to remind me to "always look at the whole animal— never forget how important people's pets are to them, and the connection they have with each other." I still have that sculpture in my exam room and look at it every day. Her advice has served me well throughout my career.

Although it's a tough profession, I truly love being a doctor for several reasons. The days are interesting and no two cases are ever the same — I learn something new in my field every single day. I am very proud of my team and find teaching and mentoring young doctors very rewarding. Being on the forefront of new technologies/medical procedures and compiling data from various clinical trials is also exciting. Having our work published in medical journals and presented at national meetings is pretty awesome too.

It's a powerful feeling to take an ill or injured pet and being able to restore their health, and return them to their family. The pure joy and heartfelt gratitude on clients' faces makes being a veterinarian all worthwhile. **After 30 years, I still find veterinary medicine exciting and it's what gets me out of bed every morning.**



"First Meeting" by Dee Crowley

THE TAKEAWAY TAKE THE NEXT STEP

We hope that these words have uplifted and brought you clarity of purpose. At NorthStar VETS®, we live by one common purpose: to improve the quality of life for our patients, clients, the family veterinarian, and our staff. This book meets that goal. To that end, know that we are always here for you, whether you are a pet parent in need of our veterinary services, a referring veterinarian looking to partner with someone you trust, or a veterinary team member looking to find the right place to call home. If this book has inspired you we'd love to hear about it!

NorthStar VETS® is always accessible 24/7 (365 days of the year). Please visit northstarvets.com to find relevant resources, research our veterinarians, “instant chat” with our Client Services Representatives, reach us by phone (609) 259-8300, FAX (609) 259-8484, or email any inquiries to info@northstarvets.com. We invite you to connect with our social media outlets and to register for our monthly newsletters to get to know us better.

We leave you with one last thought. Once you've established your purpose – *what you're here to do*. Consider your values – *how you go about achieving your purpose*. These shape our hospitals and our culture, enforcing our five core principles, (C-PETS) that we hope resonate with you.



COMPASSION

We will interact with our clients, patients and community with kindness and empathy.



PROFESSIONALISM

We will conduct ourselves in a moral and responsible manner and treat our clients, patients and colleagues with respect and integrity.



EXCELLENCE

We will provide the highest quality care and state-of-the-art knowledge in the practice of veterinary medicine.



TEAMWORK

The staff at NorthStar VETS® along with our clients and their family veterinarian will work as a cohesive unit by recognizing the equal contributions and value of every team member.



SERVICE

We are dedicated to exceeding our clients' expectations through timely and effective communication, exemplary customer service, outstanding patient care and promoting a learning environment.



AKA: "THE BIG HOSPITAL"



NORTHSTAR VETS® — ROBBINSVILLE, NJ —

Built in 2011, NorthStar VETS® is an award-winning, emergency, trauma and specialty referral center with over 250 employees, including more than 50 veterinarians housed in a state-of-the-art, 33,000 sq. ft. facility headquartered in Mercer County (Robbinsville, NJ).



A SATELLITE EXPANSION IN SOUTH JERSEY NORTHSTAR VETS® — MAPLE SHADE, NJ —

The Burlington County 24/7 emergency and trauma satellite in Maple Shade, NJ is all about convenience for clients in South Jersey. Built in 2015, this hospital has five exam rooms and an operating suite. This 4,746 sq. ft. facility is centrally located and easily accessible by two major highways — **Route 38 and Route 73**.



SECOND SATELLITE AT THE JERSEY SHORE NORTHSTAR VETS® — BRICK, NJ —

To service clients near the Jersey Shore, a second 10,000 sq. ft. satellite location was built in Brick, NJ in 2020. This 24/7 emergency facility (located in the “Market Place at Brick” Shopping Center) allows pet parents to utilize the same veterinarians available in Robbinsville, but with the convenience of an Ocean County location. — **Route 70**.



CENTRAL NJ: 315 ROBBINSVILLE-AlLENTOWN ROAD, ROBBINSVILLE, NJ 08691

SOUTHERN NJ: 2834 ROUTE 73 NORTH, MAPLE SHADE, NJ 08052

JERSEY SHORE: 507 ROUTE 70, BRICK, NJ 08723

OPEN 24 / 7 • 365 DAYS A YEAR • (609) 259-8300

NORTHSTARVETS.COM

