Our Everyday Heroes

The Remarkable Things

We Do to Help Save Lives
Trees are budding, daffodils and windflowers are up, and heather is blooming. Although at this time of year on the Palouse one is never quite sure what day-to-day (or hour-to-hour) changes the weather will bring, spring is undeniably here and things are looking up.

And so it is with the college.

After weathering significant budget problems we are beginning to replenish our faculty ranks, especially in the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences where we are actively searching for exceptional new faculty in equine medicine, small animal medicine, small animal surgery, and medical oncology. In the next few months more searches will be launched and for some specialty areas we will be able to recruit two faculty members. Our other departments are searching for new faculty colleagues as well.

The leadership team in the college is also changing as we bring on board a new director for the School of Molecular Biosciences and a new chair for the Department of Veterinary Microbiology and Pathology. In the next few months these new leaders will join the team as we transition through anticipated retirements. We also continue to benefit hugely from University investments in our programs and facilities as we move into the latest of our new research buildings—the Veterinary and Biomedical Research Building—which will house our renamed Department of Integrative Physiology and Neuroscience (formerly the VCAPP department).

I just returned from observing one of Dr. Lankester’s rabies vaccination teams (pages 4-5 of this issue); one of our fourth-year students will soon participate as part of her studies. We know how to eradicate rabies, yet it kills more than 55,000 people each year and causes other major losses. Our task is now to translate that knowledge into action for a global eradication effort.

We still face challenges and obstacles, but they are manageable, and they pale in relation to the positive outlook for our college and the great things we are poised to accomplish. Our growing and strengthening programs will better serve the students who will be the next generation of veterinarians, biomedical scientists, and other health care professionals. Our students will advance the state of our basic knowledge and the application of that knowledge to improve the health of animals and people. We will better serve animals that are entrusted to us for care—such as Chester, who you will learn more about in this issue. This is why we strive.

And, finally, the best of things: we just had our commencement, that wonderful ceremony marking the onset of the next stage of a new graduate’s life. This is perhaps the best evidence that things are looking up. With another batch of Cougar veterinarians embarking on their varied careers, undergraduates heading off to the next phases of their lives—often for education in the health professions and in graduate programs—and the newly minted doctorates and master’s heading out to do great things, who could not be bullish on our future?

Go Cougs!

Dr. Bryan Slinker, Dean
WSU College of Veterinary Medicine
Roya Eshragh and Gyan Harwood of Vancouver, British Columbia, wanted a cat. So they did what many animal lovers do—they went to their local shelter to adopt an adult animal in need of a home. They fell in love with an orange tabby, and named him “Chester” (he had previously been called “Cheetoh,” but they thought he looked more like a “Chester”). On January 30, 2012—Chester’s adoption day—his life changed forever.

“Chester” was lethargic and didn’t play before his surgery.

Roya and Gyan noticed right away that Chester didn’t seem to play like a young cat would. He had little energy, his breathing was not quite right, and his body also had an unusual shape. After a few trips to the veterinarian it was discovered that Chester had a diaphragmatic hernia (a tear in the diaphragm) that caused his internal organs—stomach, small intestines, liver, spleen—to move into his chest, which affected his breathing. Because he also had a healed pelvic fracture, it was thought that Chester had been hit by a car.

“Chester’s owners didn’t feel his quality of life was good,” said Dr. Kelly Might, WSU veterinary resident. “He couldn’t play or get to be a cat.”

So Roya and Gyan drove Chester from Canada to the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital where Dr. Might told them about the risks and benefits of having surgery to correct the diaphragmatic hernia. He also told them that the surgery would cost between $3,000 and $4,000. As graduate students that kind of surgery seemed financially out of reach, but Roya and Gyan were willing to do whatever they could.

“Giving up on him when he had been fighting so hard for so long on his own wasn’t an option,” said Roya. “Dr. Might realized we would need help financially. He told us about the Good Samaritan Fund.”

The WSU Good Samaritan Fund is used to help animals being treated at the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital that are in need of special care, but whose owners cannot afford to pay for care. Roya and Gyan received $1000 to partially pay for Chester’s medical expenses, which ended up totalling nearly $5000.

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“Chester’s Team:
Left to right: Krystal Fortier (’13 DVM); Elizabeth Nordeen (’13 DVM); Dr. Boel Fransson, WSU veterinary surgeon; and Dr. Kelly Might, WSU veterinary surgery resident.
At 8:00 a.m. people in an East African village have already begun to line up with their dogs. Mostly it is young boys with their pets coming to one of the many free rabies vaccination clinics set up around the Serengeti National Park in northern Tanzania.

“There can be 200 people in line at a time and we may vaccinate as many as 1,000 dogs in a day,” said Dr. Felix Lankester, clinical assistant professor for the Paul G. Allen School for Global Animal Health.

They never turn anyone away. By 2:00 p.m. they are done administering the vaccinations. The team vaccinates an average of 500 dogs each day. They visit 180 villages every year in seven districts adjacent to the Serengeti. The vaccination zone (a cordon sanitaire) is a belt of land 10 kilometers wide (or about six miles) that stretches approximately 1,100 kilometers all the way around the Serengeti National Park, covering a total area of approximately 11,000 square kilometers. Although there is rabies outside of the vaccinated area, because of the program the cordon sanitaire itself is rabies free.

“Human incidence of rabies in the vaccination zone has been reduced to zero since the project began,” said Lankester. Before the program there would have been 50 to 100 cases each year and most people would have witnessed someone with the disease. Of those cases, one-third to one-half would have been children under the age of 16.

“What distinguishes rabies from other viruses is that the vaccine is very effective in eliminating the disease,” said Lankester. “The vaccine is 100 percent effective.”

The disease is easily preventable with regular dog vaccinations, or by post-bite vaccinations within the first 24 hours after a person is bitten by a rabid dog. But once symptoms appear, the disease is always fatal. According to the World Health Organization, more than 55,000 people die from rabies each year. These deaths are mostly in Africa, India, and other parts of Asia where 99 percent of rabies cases are found, said Lankester.

“Rabies is the deadliest zoonotic disease on the planet,” said Dr. Guy Palmer, director of the Allen School. “Our goal is to eliminate rabies as a human health problem.”

Once 70 percent of domestic dogs are vaccinated in an area, the virus can no longer find sufficient susceptible hosts and it dies out. To reach as many dogs as possible the teams use two approaches. In six of the seven districts, they set up central point vaccination clinics in the villages. Residents learn about the clinics through announcements on a loud speaker or by word of mouth. In the seventh district the
population is predominantly nomadic Maasai tribal people. So instead of a central point clinic, Lankester and his team travel from household-to-household (boma-to-boma), to provide the vaccinations.

Before he joined WSU in 2012, Dr. Lankester worked on the rabies project for three years with Chicago’s Lincoln Park Zoo. The program was started in 2003 when rabies outbreaks were killing lions and African wild dogs. Lankester first became interested in becoming a veterinarian and studying wild animal medicine as a child spending holidays and summers in Africa, so the rabies work in the Serengeti was a perfect fit. When the opportunity arose to sustain the program through a partnership between the Allen School and the Lincoln Park Zoo, it provided a way for Lankester to carry on the important vaccination work.

The long-term plan is to eventually hand the organization and implementation of the program to the local communities. But in order for it to be a success, researchers at the Allen School must find a way to reduce the cost of administering the vaccinations. Even at just $3 to vaccinate a single child’s dog, the cost is too much for most Tanzanians. One strategy to lower the cost of the vaccinations is to have community members liaise with the veterinary district offices, rather than hiring a single team of Tanzanians to travel around setting up clinics in the various communities.

“By training community members to administer the vaccines, it may reduce the costs of rabies vaccination compared to traditional delivery approaches,” says Dr. Jonathan Yoder, professor in the School of Economic Sciences and the Allen School, who lived in Tanzania as a child. “And more closely aligning the costs of management with the benefits received by the community is key for sustainability.”

Researchers at the Allen School will assess the effectiveness and the difference in cost between the team-based vaccination campaign and the community campaign starting in 2014. Then in 2015-16 they will make a wider comparison to assess if the community-led program is equally effective and less expensive. That way they can identify important cost factors and determine the approach that is most cost effective and beneficial to citizens.

“The long-term goal is to use these strategies and knowledge to develop other rabies-free zones,” said Lankester. “And wipe out the disease nationally and internationally.”

**Rabies Project Partners**

Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago researchers Lisa Faust and Anna Czupryna

University of Glasgow researchers Sarah Cleaveland, Katie Hampson, and Tiziana Lembo

MSD Animal Health (vaccine donations)

Tanzanian Wildlife Research Institute

Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority

Serengeti Health Initiative field staff Dr. Imam Mzimbiri, Machunde Bigambo, Israel Silaa, and Paulo Tango

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**The WSU Paul G. Allen School for Global Animal Health** works with partners around the world to help reduce the threat of rabies to people in and around the Serengeti National Park in northern Tanzania. The goal is to use this rabies-free zone as a model for other parts of Africa and Asia.
From the Office of Development and External Relations

In our Everyday Heroes issue, we wanted to highlight the many things—big and small—that people like you do to support the college. We have countless heroes supporting us in so many ways—it was hard to pick just a few. Here are three who have found ways to use their talents to give back to WSU. From a client who gives scarves to cancer survivors, to a writer who donates her proceeds to a student scholarship, to an alumnus who serves countless hours to help train veterinary students, they have made a big difference in the lives of animals, clients, and our students. Thanks for all you do!

A gesture that is seemingly small can have a great impact. That’s how Phyllis Finley of Kenmore, Washington, felt when her dog “Red,” a golden retriever–chow mix, walked out of the oncologist’s office in Seattle wearing an “I’m a Cancer Survivor” scarf on the one year anniversary of her diagnosis. Just seeing the word “survivor” was a much needed morale boost after months of treatments and it gave Phyllis and her husband, Mike, hope. Diagnosed with nasal cancer in 2004 at just 6 years old, the doctors told them that Red only had a few months to live. They immediately took her to the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital for treatment. At WSU, Red, as Phyllis puts it, received “royal treatment” from her medical team, particularly Betsy Wheeler, an oncology veterinary technician, and Dr. Rance Sellon, a WSU oncologist. Knowing she could never really repay Betsy and Dr. Sellon (who she says are the real heroes), she decided to pay it forward. She made 10 “I’m a Cancer Survivor” scarves and asked Dr. Sellon if his team could use them. He said yes, and now she sews an average of 250 scarves per year. After their final cancer treatment, Betsy ties a scarf around each patient’s neck. Clients are often deeply touched by the gesture. It has been eight years since she made the first scarf and they still give hope and brighten the day of people she will never meet.

After Jill Strickler’s beloved blond cocker spaniel, “Jessie,” passed away in 2009, Jill wanted to repay the kindness they received at WSU. So she decided to start a student scholarship. But as a writer, Jill knew she could do even more. So she decided to write a series of books to honor Jessie and everyone who cared for her at the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital. All the proceeds from the books go toward The Jessie Strickler Scholarship. The first book, Jingle Bell Bride (using her pen name, Jillian Hart), came out in late 2012. The sisters in the book were named for Jessie’s veterinarians at WSU and it was dedicated to Dr. Chelsea Tripp, a former WSU veterinary resident. Stickler hopes to write at least 20 additional books as part of the series for each veterinarian, resident, and intern who cared for Jessie. Her next book is due out later in 2013. To date, six $1,000 awards have been given to an intern or resident since she established the scholarship in 2010.

For the past six years, Mike Wedam (‘84 DVM), a large animal bovine veterinarian, has made four to eight 370-mile journeys each semester from his home in Sunnyside, Washington, to WSU to be a coach with the Veterinary Clinical Communications Program. Students participate in simulated cases (based on real cases) to enhance communication skills with clients. As a coach, Dr. Wedam advises students and helps them through the process of learning how to better communicate with clients. Veterinarians are trained to know what the animal is trying to tell them, but he points out that being a better listener and understanding the owner’s needs and concerns is key. Dr. Wedam and his wife, Sue (‘85 DVM), also advise and mentor several students each year during a four-week preceptorship. Dr. Wedam sees his service as a way of passing forward the help he received while he was in veterinary school. But it is the students’ eagerness to learn that he says keeps him coming back each year.

Buckley,” a golden retriever, was diagnosed with osteosarcoma (bone cancer) in August 2010. He received his scarf after his last chemotherapy treatment and is doing well today.
Dr. Terry McElwain has been promoted to Regents Professor and was recognized at the Celebrating Excellence Banquet on March 29. McElwain, a faculty member at WSU since 1989, is associate director and professor of the Paul G. Allen School for Global Animal Health and executive director of the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory. His research explores global control of infectious diseases. He is involved in development, validation, and application of molecular techniques for diagnosis and is co-inventor on 12 patents or licensing agreements. McElwain has improved the standards of animal health laboratories across the country. He has also mentored veterinary students, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows in the development of their laboratory skills and research. The promotion honors the highest level of international distinction in the discipline, which raises University standards through teaching, scholarship, and public service.

Congratulations to the 2012 Jerry Newbrey Teaching Scholars!

The Newbrey Teaching Scholar is awarded for excellence in teaching during the first three years of the veterinary core curriculum. This award is given in memory of Jerry Newbrey, who joined the VCAPP faculty in 1975, and who died too young in a climbing accident in 1990. Jerry was an exceptional teacher and student advocate. Those who receive this award richly deserve our appreciation for their commitment to our students and to excellence in the classroom.

Teresa Alessio  Tamara Grubb  Don Knowles  John Mattoon  Steven Parish  Leslie Sprunger  Stephanie Thomovsky
George Barrington  Joe Harding  Sunshine Lahmers  Katrina Mealey  Deb Sellon  Patricia Talcott  Michael Varnum
Annie Chen  Steve Hines  Charles Leathers  Robert Mealey  Rance Sellon  Ahmed Tibary  Katherine Wardrop

Your Gifts in Action

A Gift to Last

Every year for six years, Pat Youngman (’43 BS Bacteriology and Public Health) did something that has helped hundreds of WSU students. She provided enough support for the now School of Molecular Biosciences to purchase one Leica microscope each year.

“The microscopes made all the things we read in text books or hear in lecture become real,” said Katherine Rempe (’10 Microbiology), who is currently a doctoral student in molecular genetics and microbiology at Duke University. “We could see how bacteria move and behave differently.”

Originally, Katherine thought she’d pursue a degree in pharmacy, but she fell in love with microbiology.

“I enjoy research because of the problem solving involved and the fact that you never do exactly the same thing two days in a row,” said Rempe. As a doctoral student she studies a bacterium (*Haemophilus influenzae*) that is a leading cause of ear infections in children.

Katherine Rempe (’10 BS Microbiology) is currently a doctoral student in molecular genetics and microbiology at Duke University.

“Washington State University provided me many opportunities that have shaped who I am now,” said Rempe. “I was able to be involved in research, which opened up a new career for me.”

Pat Youngman’s microscopes have made a difference for countless students like Katherine in classes such as Introductory Microbiology, General Microbiology Laboratory, Diagnostic Bacteriology Laboratory, and Combined Immunology and Virology Laboratory. The microscopes are also used for pre-college outreach activities like WSU Cougar Quest.

Pat Youngman passed away in 2010. Although most students will never realize how much they benefitted from her generosity, her legacy lives on in the lives she has touched.

To learn more about how your gift can make a difference please visit [www.vetmed.wsu.edu/GiftsInAction](http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/GiftsInAction).
Look for Gatherings of WSU Alumni, Friends, and Students at these Upcoming Events!

Mark your calendars

**Peter A. Zornes Memorial Golf Tournament**

The sixth annual Peter A. Zornes Memorial Golf Tournament will be held on **Saturday, June 22, 2013, at the Colfax Golf Club** to benefit the Peter A. Zornes Memorial Neuroscience Scholarship at WSU. Register at [www.vetmed.wsu.edu/Zornes](http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/Zornes) or contact Lynne Haley at lhaley@vetmed.wsu.edu or 509-335-5021. Remember to invite your friends to play!

**Other important dates to remember**

- **June 28–29**  CVM Class reunions (’73, ’83, ’93, ’03) in Pullman
- **July 22**  Alumni reception at AVMA in Chicago
- **August 9**  Palouse Area Therapeutic Horsemanship Benefit: An Evening with Horses at Liberty in Moscow, Idaho
- **August 17**  Memorial Dog Walk at Willis D. Tucker Community Park in Snohomish, Wash. Proceeds donated to WSU Oncology Service.
- **September 21**  CVM Homecoming BBQ (vs. Idaho)
- **September 26**  CVM Dean’s Reception at McCormick & Schmick’s in Seattle
- **October 5**  College hosts reception at the WSVMA in Yakima, Washington
- **October 18–20**  The Human-Animal Interaction Symposium: A Celebration of Dr. Leo K. Bustad’s Legacy

CE courses at WSU and online are offered year round; visit [www.vetmed.wsu.edu/CE](http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/CE) for more information.

For more information about upcoming events visit [www.vetmed.wsu.edu/Events](http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/Events).