

ISU Veterinary Ambassadors

*Dianne Hellwig

For most people, initial exposure to the veterinary profession involves the routine care of their pets, working the family livestock, or perhaps a hectic jaunt across James Herriot's Yorkshire Dales. While there aren't many aspiring veterinary students who honestly expect modern veterinary practice to operate like the one at Skeldale House, most are not aware of the countless opportunities that veterinary medicine can provide. The impetus for developing an ambassador group at Iowa State's College of Veterinary Medicine was the desire to reach out to the community, thus fostering a greater understanding of the veterinary profession, as well as encouraging highly motivated students to consider this rewarding career.

Countless practitioners and acamedicians in the profession generously devote their time to mentoring students and educating the general public. The veterinary students involved with ISU Veterinary Ambassadors add a unique perspective to this task. The experiences of preparing for acceptance to the program, as well as the rigors, frustrations, and rewards of vet school life are best conveyed by the students themselves.

Members of ISU Veterinary Ambassadors interact with groups of all ages and a variety of interests, such as Iowa's Young Farmer, 4-H veterinary science groups, pre-vet students, Iowa's Talented and Gifted Student program, and local elementary schools. One of our most successful activities involve having pre-vet students spend a day at the vet school, attending a variety of classes and interacting with vet students and faculty. The group is looking forward to planning a program next Spring for Iowa's Talented and Gifted Students. We hope to provide a rewarding experience, allowing the students to mesh their science education with clinical and research thought processes. The students will be able to follow several clinical cases from presentation of the

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animal, to workup of the case and arriving at a diagnosis. Programs at local elementary schools have helped young children understand what happens at their veterinarian's office as well as understanding what it means to be responsible for a pet. Several of the Ambassadors have provided these students with hands on experience with animal examination and care, and have provided insight into deciding what makes an animal a "good" pet. Special interest groups that tour the College of Veterinary Medicine are surprised at the complexity of the profession, and many are left with an appreciation for the training involved, as well as the dedication of the students and clinicians.

As students, the concept that veterinary medicine is just as much a "people" oriented profession as it is an "animal" oriented profession, is brought to light over and over. ISU Veterinary Ambassadors has provided its members with the opportunity to hone their communication skills and share their enthusiasm about their chosen profession.

For more information on the ISU Veterinary Ambassadors please contact:
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Photo--Dianne Hellwig