



# Newsletter

The American Association of  
Human-Animal Bond Veterinarians

Volume 22 • FALL 2008

AAH- ABV web page: [www.aah-abv.org](http://www.aah-abv.org)

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



*Victoria Voith, DVM, PhD, DACVB*

Greetings,

I thought you might be interested in our beginnings. In 1974, the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (B.S.A.V.A.) convened a symposium on Pet Animals and Society at The Zoological Society of London. It brought together veterinarians, zoologists, physiologists, and psychologists who were forerunners in recognizing the importance of the Human-Animal Bond. Samuel and Elisabeth Corson, Boris M Levinson, Michael W Fox and Roger Mugford were among the attendees.

The B.S.A.V.A. held another international symposium, 1979, in London, on The Human-Companion Animal Bond. The topics had greatly expanded and included contributors from Europe and North America.

In October of 1981, the Center for

Continued on page 2

## Featuring the Argus Institute:

- Biography: Dr. Jane Shaw, DVM, PhD...pg. 3
- Bustad Award...pg. 4
- Clinic Support for People and Their Pets...pg. 5
- ISAZ Waltham Collaborative Research Award...pg. 5
- Welcome to the Communication Laboratory...pg. 6
- Helping Clients Through Difficult Decisions...pg. 7
- Becoming FRANK...pg. 9
- Firehouse Research Project...pg. 10
- CSU Pet Hospice Program...pg. 11
- Healing the Healers...pg. 12
- History of the Argus Institute...pg. 13
- Events...pg. 15

## A Paradigm Shift: From Paternalism to Partnership



*Dr. Jane Shaw and her dog, Cliff*

*Jane R. Shaw, DVM, PhD  
Director, Argus Institute*

Like pediatricians, veterinarians are tasked with one of the most challenging diagnostic situations – a sick patient who can't tell us about their symptoms, often accompanied by a nervous family member who is seeking help.

Much has changed over the years to shape our client interactions. Animals, more often than not, are considered important family members. Clients come to us looking for support and understanding of the special relationship they share with their pet.

Clients also come to us looking for answers to heal their beloved companions. Whereas traditional models of veterinarian-client-patient relationships often position the doctor as the ultimate source of knowledge, families now arrive at veterinary clinics with information

Continued on page 2

**Letter from the President:  
Victoria Voith, DVM, PhD, DACVB**

*Continued from Page One*

the Interaction of Animals and Society, The Delta Society, and The Latham Foundation sponsored an International Conference on the Human-Companion Animal Bond, hosted by the Center in Philadelphia. This meeting brought together many widely respected scientists, human-health care providers, and veterinarians from around the world.

William and Michael McCulloch and Leo Bustad ignited an early interest among veterinarians in the United States regarding the pervasive and powerful impact of the Human-Animal Bond on the welfare of people and society as a whole. They traveled widely, spoke and published in whatever venues became available.

In March of 1981 Bill Kay (DVM) and Austin Kutscher (MD) organized a 3 day meeting at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City that attracted practitioners in the veterinary and human health care disciplines. The symposium was titled “Veterinary Medical Practice: Pet Loss and Human Emotion” but the subject matter was broader than the title suggests. In a small meeting room, a group of tightly packed veterinarians enthusiastically agreed we should form an organization of veterinarians interested in the Human-Animal Bond and facilitate a Committee on the Human-Animal Bond within the American Veterinary Medical Association. And, so we did – with the help of many talented and creative people in the veterinary community.

The excitement of this era was invigorating and contagious. Several veterinary schools established Centers. The University of Minnesota and University of California, organized back to back international conferences in 1983 that attracted more than 1000 participants. Several diverse scientific organizations were developed to promote and study the interface between people and animals.

Presently, there seems to be a renewed interest in the Human-Animal Bond by both the human health and veterinary medical arenas. The One Medicine concept appears to be finally coming into focus in the main stream healing professions. The Delta Society, which was founded on the concept of One Medicine, will have a presence at our 2009 meeting in Seattle. The Society has also offered to host a strategic planning meeting for the American Association of Human-Animal Bond Veterinarians at their new headquarters in the Seattle area. Exciting times are ahead. I can feel it.

See you in Seattle.

Victoria L Voith, DVM PhD  
President, AAHAB

Published proceedings of the above mentioned conferences are:

Anderson, RS (Ed) Pet Animals & Society, Bailliere Tindall. London, 1975.

Fogle B (Ed) Interrelations Between People and Pets, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, IL, 1981.

Kay WJ et al (Eds) Veterinary Medical Practice: Pet Loss and Human Emotion, Archives of the Foundation of Thanatology, Vol 9 (2) , 1981,

Katcher AH, Beck AM, (Eds) New Perspectives on Our Lives with Companion Animals, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1983.

Anderson RK, Hart BL, Hart LA, (Eds) The Pet Connection: Its Influence on Our Health and Quality of Life, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, 1984.

**A Paradigm Shift  
Jane R. Shaw, DVM, PhD**

*Continued from Page One*

regarding their animal’s health and a increased expectations about care and desired outcomes.

Whether this information is gleaned from the Internet, magazine articles, books, or friends, clients are taking more active roles as health advocates for their pets. This presents some unique opportunities and challenges to the veterinarian-client-patient relationship.

While veterinarians have education, training, and experience to offer, it is important to recognize clients have expertise as well. In today’s veterinary appointment, many clients are seeking partners, not just experts. They want to be involved in decision-making and want to collaborate in creating a joint venture dedicated to the health of their animal. This requires a change in approach from paternalism to partnership.

The Argus Institute at Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences strives to meet these challenges through its mission and the continued evolution of its programs. At the core of Argus’s endeavors is the human-animal bond, and everything we do celebrates this relationship. Our name, in fact, comes from the epic journey of Ulysses and his dog, Argus, who waited twenty years for his master’s return. After recognizing Ulysses in

disguise, he died content, knowing that his beloved master had indeed made it home. It is this story of trust and loyalty inherent in the relationship between people and animals that is the heart of the Argus Institute's programs that you will read about in this newsletter.

## Jane R. Shaw, DVM, PhD Biography

Jane R. Shaw, DVM, PhD is a recognized expert in veterinarian-client-patient interactions. Her dissertation was the first scientific study of veterinarian-client-patient communication and her publications focus on the analysis of videotaped conversations between veterinarians and their clients and patients. Her main interest is studying the relationship between communication and clinical outcomes for veterinarians, clients and patients, including satisfaction, adherence, and patient health.

Dr. Shaw is an Assistant Professor of Veterinary Communication and the Director of the Argus Institute at Colorado State University. Dr. Shaw received her veterinary degree from Michigan State University in 1994 and received her PhD in Epidemiology at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada in 2004. Dr. Shaw was selected as the recipient of the 2009 Bustad Award, recognizing her contributions to enhancing the relationship between people and their pets.

Dr. Shaw implements the communication curriculum for the Professional Veterinary Medical Program at Colorado State University, focusing on clinical interviewing skills to enhance professional performance through partnership with colleagues and clients. She serves on the advisory committee for the International Conference on Communication in Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Shaw is called upon internationally and nationally to conduct skills-based communication workshops at veterinary conferences and symposia. She consults with veterinary practices to enhance teamwork, continuity of care, and client service.

Her academic career began as an instructor in the problem-based learning curriculum at Cornell University. From 2004-2005 she was an Assistant Professor of Epidemiology and Communication at Western University of Health Sciences. She worked in companion animal private practice and academic settings. She was the founder of Cornell Companions, an animal-assisted activities program and advisor to student volunteers at Pet Loss Support Hotlines at Cornell University and University of Guelph.

## Thanks to Our Sponsors



**1-800-Rx2-2222**

[www.rxvitamins.com/pets](http://www.rxvitamins.com/pets)



Pets Best offers a generous 80 percent coverage of covered claims (after the deductible), liberal wellness benefits, the ability to choose your own veterinarian, and prompt claims settlement!

**Dr. Jack Stephens**  
**1-877-PetsBest (1-877-738-7237)**  
[www.PetsBest.com](http://www.PetsBest.com)

**ASPCA®**  
**PROFESSIONAL**

*Lilly*

**Answers That Matter.**

[www.lilly.com](http://www.lilly.com)

[WWW.WALTHAM.COM](http://WWW.WALTHAM.COM)



**The WALTHAM Foundation**

# *Bustad Award:*

Recognition for the Human-Animal Bond

Judea Franck, Associate Development Director of the Colorado State University  
College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences



*From left: Mr. Lawrence Novell, Delta Society, Dr. Gregory Hammer, AVMA, Dr. Jane Shaw, Argus Institute and Dr. Mary Beth Leininger, Hill's Pet Nutrition. The Bustad Award is sponsored by the American Veterinary Medical Association, Delta Society, and Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc.*

Jane R. Shaw, DVM, PhD, Assistant Professor of clinical communication and Director of the Argus Institute at Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (CVMBBS), received the Leo K. Bustad Companion Animal Veterinarian of the Year Award on July 19th, 2008. This award recognizes the outstanding work of veterinarians who promote the human-animal bond through leadership, practice, education, and research.

As co-founder and first Chair of the Delta Society and Dean Emeritus at Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Leo K. Bustad is celebrated and remembered for his groundbreaking work that continues to enhance the human-animal bond. It is no wonder that this year's Bustad award winner reflects the same pioneering spirit. Shaw conducted the first study of veterinarian-client-patient communication and continues to investigate how veterinary communication impacts the care of clients and patients.

"Her efforts are having a significant impact on the way our profession approaches clients in an effort to support the human-animal connection," noted Cindy Adams, MSW, PhD, Associate Professor of Veterinary Medicine, Clinical Communication, University of Calgary. Adams was Shaw's graduate supervisor and supported her nomination.

Shaw teaches communication workshops around the world and is on the advisory committee to the International Conference on Communication in Veterinary Medicine. She also leads the communication curriculum at Colorado State University CVMBBS, helping veterinary students develop interviewing skills. Her career has been devoted to improving the relationship between the veterinary medical team, the client, and their companion animals, a three-way bond critical to improving the lives of all and making animal healthcare a success.

"As I got to know Dr. Shaw, I learned that she is not only a true expert in this field, but she has a passion for educating, understanding, and enhancing the human animal-bond," noted Michael Cavanaugh, DVM, DAPVP, Director of Veterinary Hospital Services in the Companion Animal Business Unit of Pfizer Animal Health, who led Shaw's nomination.

A veterinarian and animal lover herself, Shaw truly understands the depth and importance of these relationships. "The human-animal bond I have shared with my own dogs has been the inspiration for this award," said Shaw.



## Clinic Program: Support for People and their Companion Animals

Gail Bishop, Clinical Coordinator  
Victoria Peer Keller, Client

Argus Institute, Colorado State University  
College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences



*From left: Ms. Carol Borchert, her daughter Anna and "Casey", Gail Bishop, clinical coordinator, and Jamie Saliman, DVM Class of 2004*

"Many years ago, our beloved Greyhound mix, 'Bones,' was diagnosed with cancer. Within days we were faced with the difficult decisions that come with terminal illness. In particular, I was highly concerned about how to help our children through this process when all I could do was cry.

A friend told me about the Argus Institute and I called them immediately. An Argus counselor heard and understood my pain. She was compassionate and gave me concrete suggestions on how to help our children. Her support was a lifeline. Today, I am still grateful to Argus for helping our family during that emotional time. Argus staff offers pets the respect they deserve and honors the love we feel for them."

As the Clinic Coordinator at the Argus Institute, I feel fortunate to be invited to play a role in stories like this. In our humble beginning, we served a handful of people weekly, and now we assist five clients on average per day. Our role has expanded to support every clinical service within the Colorado State University James L. Voss Veterinary Teaching Hospital. Integrated into the medical team, Argus counselors assist clients with multiple aspects of their pet's medical treatment and decision-making. These services include providing emotional support, surgery updates and grief counseling, discussing end of life issues, support

during euthanasia, and advocating for client and pet needs. In the past year, we worked with over 1,100 people and their companion animals.

This year, together with two full-time clinical counselors, we welcomed our first Masters of Social Work intern, Lisa Hunter from Colorado State University School of Social Work. Under the supervision of the clinical counselors, Lisa is training for a future career in veterinary social work.

Our clinical service is comprehensive and one of the longest standing support programs within a veterinary teaching hospital across the United States. We are continually evolving to meet the needs of people and their companion animals. It is the families we touch that inspires our work and enhances the veterinary profession.

## ISAZ Waltham Collaborative Research Award

Erika Friedmann, Ph.D., President of the International Society of Anthrozoology (ISAZ) is thrilled to announce the launch of the ISAZ Waltham Collaborative Research Award!

The purpose of this collaboration is to stimulate new research in the area of human-animal interactions, with particular interest in the role of pets in the lives of elders, pets enhancing healthy longevity, and understanding the barriers to pet ownership. A total of \$22,000 dollars in grant funds will be available for distribution. One or more projects may be funded within this budget. The deadline to submit completed applications is: January 1, 2009.

The grant application is now available for download on the ISAZ homepage ([www.isaz.net](http://www.isaz.net) <<https://sonmail.umaryland.edu/exchweb/bin/redirect.asp?URL=https://sonmail.umaryland.edu/exchweb/bin/redirect.asp?URL=http://www.isaz.net>> ). Applications are also available from the Funding Opportunities section of the News page (<http://isaz.net/news.html> <<https://sonmail.umaryland.edu/exchweb/bin/redirect.asp?URL=https://sonmail.umaryland.edu/exchweb/bin/redirect.asp?URL=http://isaz.net/news.html>> ). Dr. Friedman is Professor at the University of Maryland School of Nursing at 655 W. Lombard Street, Baltimore, MD 21201. Her Phone number is 410-706-0659.

# Welcome to the Communication Laboratory

Colorado State University College of Veterinary  
Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

Judea Franck, Associate Development Director

Think back to your first day on a clinical rotation. Maybe you greeted your client and forgot to introduce yourself to the patient. Maybe your questions only evoked one-word answers and it took you twenty minutes to understand why your client had brought their animal in for veterinary care in the first place. Or worse yet, your client began to cry during the course of the appointment and you didn't know what to do.

Wouldn't it have been nice to hit some invisible pause button and take a time-out and/or have a coach in the room that could have helped you respond in the moment? Luckily for the veterinary students at Colorado State University's College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, thanks to the Argus Institute, that pause button does remarkably exist. In the Communication Laboratory, students have the chance to interact with clients and their animals with a coach by their side and a small group of classmates.

These clients aren't actual clients with a clinic appointment; they are paid professional actors, termed simulated clients. But their pets are real and their problems are modeled on cases seen in veterinary practice.

Before each simulated client interaction, students identify a set of communication goals to help hone their interviewing skills. During the interaction, a peer group watches and listens from an observation room behind double-sided glass, writing down notes and constructive feedback. The communication coach, a facilitator veterinarian, stays in the exam room and offers advice as needed throughout the session.

"Commonly students are hoping to learn how to ask the 'right' questions in order to get a good patient history," says Jane R. Shaw, DVM, PhD, Director of the Argus Institute and an Assistant Professor of Veterinary Communication. "They also want to know how to deal with emotional or angry clients and how to appear both competent and confident in the clinic setting." When the appointment begins, it is just like any other veterinarian-client-patient interaction. The student is expected to gather a case history, identify the client's concerns,



*Dr. Leila Asfar, DVM Class of 2007 and simulated client,  
Leonard Barrett and "Max"*

and, perhaps most challenging, establish a good rapport that will be the foundation for their client relationships down the road.

Yet, instead of simply getting one chance at a first impression, students can ask for a time-out and ask the coach for advice. They can also rewind and "do over" any of the interaction to improve their skills.

"I was really nervous, but I thought it was a pretty positive experience," said Shannon McLean, a junior student in the Professional Veterinary Medical Program, after her session with Nathan Harrison who was visiting with his hedgehog, "Nummers." "Through asking open-ended questions, I learned about 'Nummers' care and Nathan's challenges with his menagerie of other pets."

"I sensed her genuine nature through her caring and concerned facial expressions," said the actor playing "Nathan" after the session had concluded. "Although she discovered some details, I would have appreciated more exploration of my home situation. I was talking a lot, which is a great clue that I had more to say." Often afraid of being perceived as prying, his advice caught Shannon and the other students by surprise.

"The laboratory gives students a chance to explore interacting with clients in a safe and supportive environment without added pressure. They can experiment, take risks, and discover what is really going on for the client and the animal," says Dr. Bruce Connally, communication coach and assistant professor of equine field service at Colorado State University. This experience offers hands-on learning with room to make mistakes, an opportunity most of us can only dream of.

The Communication Laboratory is sponsored by Barfield Charitable Trust, Hills Pet Nutrition, and Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

## Teaching Communication Skills to Help Clients through End-of Life Decisions

Debra Davison, DVM, CSU Class of 2008  
Colorado State University

Ghost Written by Judea Franck, Associate Development Director

Euthanasia means “good death,” and it is one of the hardest decisions our clients make for their companion animals. It is one that is filled with compassion, but also wrought with a deep sense of guilt. “Am I doing the right thing?” “Should I have done this sooner?” “Am I being selfish keeping my pet alive?” For our clients, these endless questions are often overwhelming.

As a veterinarian in my first year of practice, euthanasia presents one of the biggest challenges because, despite excellent medical training, I cannot make everything okay. Euthanasia may be the best decision, the right choice for an animal; yet, it is very hard on our clients. The gravity and emotions of the moment never cease to impact me.

So as veterinarians, how do we prepare for these moments when we must be a medical professional, as well as a source of support, compassion, and understanding? How can we comfort our clients and their companion animals? How do we care for ourselves in caring for others?

Although nothing can prepare you for what it will feel like, my experiences on the Argus Institute Senior Rotation equipped me to support my clients and animal patients in the most difficult of circumstances.

Before the rotation, I considered myself a strong communicator. I was drawn to the veterinary profession, not only because of my love of animals and the human-animal bond, but also because of the human-human connection that inevitably develops in service of our animal patients. Despite my confidence, I could not believe how much I learned, how much my communication skills improved, and how fulfilling it was to comfort clients and animals during challenging times.

On this rotation, I served as Argus Institute student counselor for the in the clinic support program. Each day, I talked to clients, listened to their stories, helped them understand the situation they were facing, and walked them through the many options available. In several instances, I consoled a saddened family and provided comfort during euthanasia.



*Dr. Debra Davison, DVM  
Class of 2008, Colorado State University*

The experience was unique in the sense that I had the opportunity to act solely as a source of emotional support for the client and animal, working along side the veterinary team. In private practice, we often wear all the hats, whereas this rotation allowed me to focus singly on the client’s perspective.

Towards the end of the rotation, I had the opportunity to practice an emergency scenario with a simulated client. This helped me enhance my skills and identify particular weaknesses. Before entering the room, I remember feeling tremendously nervous--sweaty palms, butterflies in my stomach, the works. Yet, as the interaction unfolded, I began to realize I had the skills I needed to help this client. Even though it was a staged event, the actor was incredibly good, remaining in character the entire time, so I felt as if the situation was real.

As a result of these experiences, I came to appreciate that silence can be the best medicine, that slowing down my pace of speech was important, and that I don’t have to make everything okay, because some things are never okay. I just have to be a caring presence to provide comfort and assurance.



As hard as it was, the Argus rotation taught me that I could handle euthanasia discussions; a confidence I rely on now. Recently, I was asked by a client to talk to her ten-year-old son and explain why his beloved cat was not coming home. Although the request caught me by surprise, I knelt down to be eye to eye with the little boy. I found I knew exactly what to say, and said that his cat had been sick for a very long time and despite everything we have tried, we cannot make him feel better. I told him it was time to let him go, let him die. As hard as it is, you have to use the word die. I then gave him a hug and assured him that it wasn't his fault. Days later, his mother phoned to thank me for helping their cat, and their family.

**HAPPY  
HOLIDAYS**  
from the  
**AAH-ABV**



## 2008-2009 Board of Directors

### President

Victoria Voith, DVM,  
PhD, DACVB  
Pomona, CA

### President Elect

Tami Shearer, DVM  
Dillsboro, NC

### Secretary

Marcy Hammerle, DVM  
O'Fallon, MO

### Treasurer

Thomas Krall, DVM  
St. Petersburg, FL

### Immediate Past-President

Martha A. Littlefield,  
DVM, MS  
Baton Rouge, LA

### Newsletter Editor

Alice Villalobos DVM  
Hermosa Beach, CA

### Interim Executive Director

John Wright, DVM  
Saint Paul, MN

## 2008-2009 Directors at Large

Phil Arkow,  
Philadelphia, PA

Francois Martin, MA, PhD  
St. Joseph, MO

Emilia Wong Gordon, DVM  
Berkeley, CA

Richard Meadows, DVM  
Columbia, MO

Greg Takashima, DVM  
Lake Oswego, OR

Brian Forsgren  
Cleveland OH

visit the AAH-ABV  
[www.aahabv.org](http://www.aahabv.org)



# Becoming FRANK

Jane R. Shaw, DVM, PhD, Director, Argus Institute  
Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine  
and Biomedical Sciences

Ghost written by Judea Franck, Associate Development Director

We've all had experiences with clients that we wish could have gone differently. Maybe we feel as though we did not connect or fully discover the client's concern, and we worry that our patient's care will suffer because of it. It is hard to admit, but we can all fall into a routine in our client interviews and our communication tools can and do get dull. When veterinarians first hear about FRANK, a program aimed at helping us sharpen client communication skills, many respond with skepticism. We pride ourselves on being good communicators. We find that most of our clients are comfortable with our bedside manner, and we don't really think we have anything to learn.

The idea of having a room full of colleagues watch as we meet with a client and examine their pet doesn't sound that appealing, even though the client is a paid actor in a simulation. When we discover that we will be videotaped, that almost completely renders this kind of workshop out of the question. Yet, our good friends and colleagues rave about this experience, and so we find ourselves in a video-equipped exam room nervously waiting for a simulated client to enter as if this is our very first appointment ever.

As educators dedicated to improving client communication, my colleague Suzanne Kurtz, PhD, professor and director of clinical communication at Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine, and I were approached by Pfizer Animal Health and challenged to develop a curriculum that could help veterinarians be more "frank" when discussing, not only the benefits, but also the risks of particular treatments with their clients.

At that time, Pfizer's Veterinary Medical Information and Product Support group was receiving calls from clients who were upset because their animals were experiencing treatment side-effects. Many felt that their veterinarians hadn't prepared them for the risks of treatment and ultimately ended up feeling misinformed. The question that arose is that veterinarians seemed to talk about these issues, however did the client receive the intended message?

We developed FRANK to help change those outcomes. We wanted to help veterinarians discover greater perspectives on how their clients receive and interpret information and give them the strategies and tools to be more effective communicators. One of the fundamental principles of FRANK is relationship-centered



*FRANK participants observe while their colleague, Paul Gambardella, surgeon (center), conducts an interview with simulated client, donnie Betts*

care, in which interactions between the veterinary team and client are characterized as collaborations between partners. It is essentially this veterinarian-client-patient bond that will lead to enhanced compliance to veterinary recommendations, improved patient health, increased client and veterinarian satisfaction, and better teamwork.

These principles are the focus of a two-day, interactive, intensive workshop, during which veterinarians develop new communication skills that they can experiment with. The interactive nature of FRANK is one of the most important aspects of the program. Not only do veterinarians become aware of certain communication gaps and challenges, they are able to put into practice new strategies and techniques that they have enhanced throughout the workshop. Using the same methodology as the Argus Institute's communication laboratory (see Welcome to the Communication Laboratory on page 6), veterinarians are given the opportunity to examine everything from body language to question-asking style, to how they convey diagnostic and treatment information with simulated clients. Not only do they receive feedback and suggestions for improvement from workshop coaches, they also receive important input from colleagues, who watch the interactions from an observation room. Although we can only reach a small number of veterinarians at a time – a maximum of 30 can attend each course – after every workshop I hear about the profound impact on the way participants interact with their clients and staff. Veterinarians leave the program energized to work on achieving a higher level of communication performance in the exam room and with the veterinary medical team.

I am particularly thankful that Pfizer has made this investment so that we can offer this workshop on a national scale. I appreciate the opportunity to work with esteemed colleague Dr. Suzanne Kurtz, a true leader in the field. I am also grateful for the collaboration with the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association, promoting the workshops to Colorado veterinarians. It's incredibly fulfilling to see the approaches change and to know that client service is enhanced as well as patient care. You can't get more FRANK than that.

# The Firehouse Research Project: Lessons in Veterinary Communication

Jane R. Shaw, DVM, PhD, Director, Argus Institute, Colorado State University  
College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences



*Dr. Cassie Todd and Diana Costa with Firehouse examine the eye of "Oliver" while Lillian Carvello looks on*

Today, people are seeking veterinarians who take their concerns to heart, fully listen to their stories, and understand the role the animal plays in their life. They desire a veterinarian who takes the time to develop a special connection with them and their pet. The Firehouse Project is intended to help veterinary teams meet these needs through engaging the client as an active partner and building strong relationships.

Firehouse Animal Health Centers is a Denver-based group of veterinary practices. The Firehouse Project is a collaboration among Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences Argus Institute, the University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine Center for Advancing Professional Excellence, and Firehouse Animal Health Centers, to enhance veterinarian-client-patient communication at Firehouse practices.

The project goal is to increase outcomes of care for veterinarians, clients, and patients; including improved staff teamwork and satisfaction, quality of patient care, client adherence to veterinary recommendations, and support for the veterinarian-client-patient relationship. Firehouse Animal Health Centers employ a customer intimacy business model and strive to surpass benchmarks in patient and client care. "Ultimately, our quality of care depends on our ability to communicate with clients, animals, and staff," said Cassie Todd, DVM, Firehouse Veterinarian. "Without effective communication, our standard of care suffers."

The research team visits the practice monthly, provides communication skills training, and measures outcomes. This includes multiple one-on-one coaching sessions with each staff member after the observation of real client interactions and feedback that they can put into place in their next visit. In addition, interactions with simulated clients address a variety of scenarios. The training is unique in that the education is hands-on and takes place onsite in the clinic, and the entire practice team participates.

"Colorado State University is one of the few veterinary schools in the nation to devote significant resources to veterinary communication," said Jed Rogers, DVM, Firehouse Chief Medical Officer. "Investing in communication skills is forward-thinking to say the least."

The perceptions of the Firehouse team included enhanced client service, compliance, new client referrals, and sustained client relationships. Even more so they experienced improved inter-professional teamwork, staff communication, and overall job satisfaction. Due to the success of the pilot project at Firehouse's Capitol Hill location, in November we conducted the first training session at the Park Hill location. The Firehouse Project is sponsored by Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Pfizer Animal Health, Hill's Pet Nutrition, Nestle Purina PetCare Company, Antech Diagnostics, and Firehouse Animal Health Centers.

Where to from here? This is one of the first outcomes-based communication studies in veterinary medicine and will inform methods of teaching communication to veterinary students and professionals. Its approach to outcomes measurement assesses the impact of communication in day-to-day practice interactions. Training the entire team is a novel approach and promotes a common culture of respect and trust in building strong partnerships with clients and colleagues.

# Pet Hospice Program: Compassionate Care in Action

Gail Bishop, BS, Clinical Coordinator  
Argus Institute

Lindsey Habermann, PVM Class of 2009  
Colorado State University

Kyran Cadmus, PVM Class of 2010  
Colorado State University

“Going on my first hospice visit was nerve-wracking. My colleague and I wondered if the family would accept us and whether we would be able to help. We seemed to have more questions than answers. Thankfully our fears were unrealized. Katy, a 10-year-old Beagle who was recently diagnosed with lymphoma, met us at the front door with her tail wagging and her human family fast behind. We were welcomed into their cozy home and introductions ensued, including two young children. The family wanted to share all that they knew about Katy, so we all sat on the floor with Katy laying in the middle. The first visit was starting off on the right foot.

For the next few months, my team mate and I were the eyes and ears of Katy’s veterinarian as we monitored her condition, while Katy enjoyed her last months comfortably at home. Our weekly visits were a mixture of supporting and educating Katy’s family as they continued to care for her medical needs. We would assess Katy’s pain and current medical status, administer any medications and offer support to her family. It wasn’t unusual for the kids to be by our sides during our visits; asking questions and helping as best they could. Our relationships with this special family deepened with each encounter.”

The Colorado State University Pet Hospice Program at the Argus Institute is not a specific place, but a philosophy. The mission of the Pet Hospice Program is to provide compassionate end of life care for pets and emotional support and education for their families. It functions on the principle that death is a part of life. Terminal illnesses and the dying process can be experienced with dignity, as an animal rests at home with its loving family.

Established in 2004, the Pet Hospice Program is the first such student-run service within a veterinary teaching hospital. The program’s goal is to care for families with terminally ill animals through home visits made by veterinary student volunteers, who provide the pet and family with simple in-home medical



*In memory of "Katy" - Gabrielle Pearl and "Katy"*

care, quality of life assessment, emotional support, and grief education. Since its inception, the program has provided care for 78 patients and service to 22 local veterinary clinics and trained 83 veterinary students. These services are provided at no charge for the families and the referring local veterinarians.

The hospice program offers a true win-win for all involved. The dying companion animal can stay at home while receiving supportive care from the pet hospice volunteers under the instruction of the family veterinarian. The veterinarian is kept informed of the status of their patient and the family is offered much needed support. The student receives a unique and specialized education while providing a valuable service to the hospice family, patient, and veterinarian.

“Three months later, Katy’s lymphoma was out of remission and her quality of life had diminished immensely. Our conversations were dominated by discussions of quality of life and details about euthanasia: When is the right time? Who would be present? Where would it take place? How could we care for her body?

The day arrived for all of us to say good-bye to Katy and we were invited to share in this intimate experience. With Katy lying in the grass surrounded by her family, we read poems as she took her last breath. Thinking back to the first visit with Katy’s family, I had no idea how rewarding and life-changing this experience would be. It has shaped the veterinarian I will be and the care that I will provide my own clients and their pets.”



# The Healer's Art: Curriculum for Healing the Healer

Jane R. Shaw, DVM, PhD, Director  
Argus Institute  
Colorado State University  
College of Veterinary Medicine  
and Biomedical Sciences

This past year, I was reminded of an important lesson--when I am connected to the heart of my work, I become more insightful, my work is richer and deeper, and creative energies flow boundlessly. I started to wonder how I could teach that one of the greatest sources of fulfillment in the veterinary profession is connecting with clients and their pets. Daily veterinary practice can become rote and routine and these special relationships are at the heart of our work -- they create meaning and rejuvenate one's soul.

My journey to answer this question began with attending the "Healer's Art Faculty Development Workshop" at the International Conference on Communication in Healthcare, a short course presenting the teachings of Rachel Remen, MD, Clinical Professor of Family and Community Medicine at the University of California San Francisco School of Medicine. What appealed to me was the focus on self-care through reflections on the meaning of medicine, something I could put into practice for myself and in teaching students. Often students on the first day of the Argus Institute senior rotation state that they are worried about getting emotionally involved or attached to their clients and patients. This concerns me because creating distance could potentiate compassion fatigue and associated burnout and turnover.

Fortuitously, three months later, a colleague sent me a copy of Rachel Remen's book, *My Grandfather's Blessings*. The note attached simply stated, "These stories reflect your teachings to veterinarians, in creating space for clients to share their story." This collection of short narratives shares the joys and challenges of physicians and patients directly mirroring those of veterinarians and clients. These lessons of resilience, healing, and compassion deeply resounded with me. For months I read a story a day. Hungry to learn more, I discovered the "Healer's Art Faculty Development Course."

I wondered whether they would accept a veterinarian to this course designed for physicians. My query arrived at the time that Rachel's beloved cat, Putty was in his final days of life. From our conversations, it was apparent that she recognized that those who care for our animal companions share the same mission of service as physicians. I was the first veterinarian to be extended an invitation to the "Healer's Art."

United as a group of 16 medical educators and clinicians, we experienced the course first as students then as educators. The "Healer's Art" curriculum, offered to first and second year medical students, creates a safe learning environment to explore the time-honored values of service, relationship, commitment, and calling that are at the heart of the practice of medicine. This course enables students to maintain and strengthen their service intention and perspective as they meet the pressures and demands of medical training.

It was a transformative experience to say the least. Through small group interactions, I rediscovered my calling to veterinary medicine and my deep bond with dogs in particular. I uncovered some of my own wounds, and tended to them, enabling me to be an even more compassionate and empathetic healer. I affirmed the importance of the work I do in veterinary communication, taking a personal oath to fully embrace this work with the utmost dedication. These teachings have brought a greater sense of accomplishment, source of inspiration, and enhanced meaning to my daily work.

In 2009, the "Healer's Art" will be offered in 58 medical schools as an elective course. With the college's support, we plan to offer the first "Healer's Art" course at Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. The course is composed of five three-hour small group interactive sessions focusing on wholeness, grief and loss, mystery and awe, and service as a way of life.

To share these lessons, we intend to host a "Finding Meaning in Veterinary Medicine" discussion group for faculty and area practitioners to explore values inherent in the practice of veterinary medicine. This is an opportunity for colleagues to share their thoughts on topics, such as service, compassion, listening, suffering, dignity, and healing.

Coincidentally, this week I received pictures of Rachel's newly adopted cat, Rumi, a beautiful lynx point ragdoll, whose poses confirmed that he is right at home. I was reminded of one of Rachel's lessons that people and animals are drawn to us for who we are and what is inside of us. They are attracted to our care and compassion, imperfections as human beings, as well as our broader life experiences and hobbies -- our whole self --mind, body, heart, and spirit.

# History of the Argus Institute



From left: Gail Bishop, Del Rae Heiser, Erin Allen, Carrie Katona, Jane Shaw and Lisa Hunter

- 1984 - Dr. Stephen Withrow, veterinary surgical oncologist, realized that his clients needed more than medical treatment for their animals and consulted with Colorado State University's Department of Human Development and Family Studies to create a client support service called "Changes."
- 1987 - Implementation of human-animal bond and grief education into the Colorado State University veterinary curriculum.
- 1989 - Consulting office built in the James L. Voss Veterinary Teaching Hospital at Colorado State University.
- 1994 - Release of *The Human-Animal Bond and Grief* by Laurel Lagoni, Carolyn Butler, and Suzanne Hetts, one of the earliest resources for veterinarians on the human-animal bond and supporting clients through pet loss and grief.
- 1998 - We were renamed the Argus Institute to broaden our service perspective to include additional clinic support throughout the hospital, communication curriculum for veterinary students, and workshops for veterinary professionals.
- 2001 - Publication of *Guidelines for Bond-Centered Practice* with recommendations for building client relationships, assisting clients with animal behavior issues, and supporting clients with pet loss.
- 2002 - Grand opening of new Argus office space, classrooms, and specialized examination and observation rooms in the Animal Cancer Center addition to the Veterinary Teaching Hospital.
- 2004 - Inception of the Colorado State University Pet Hospice Program for the Fort Collins community.
- 2005 - First communication laboratory offered to junior veterinary students.
- 2006 - Implementation of the Firehouse Pilot Project at the Capitol Hill Practice in Denver, Colorado.
- 2006 - First offering of the FRANK: Veterinarian-Client Communication Workshops.
- 2009 - Come celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Argus Institute.

## The Argus Institute Mission

The mission of the Argus Institute at Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences is to strengthen veterinarian-client-patient communication and support relationships between people and their companion animals. We do this by:

1. Offering support to people who are facing challenges surrounding their pet's healthcare.
2. Teaching compassionate communication to veterinary professionals.
3. Conducting research in veterinarian-client-patient communication.
4. Providing community outreach through the student-run Pet Hospice Program and Human-Animal Bond Club.

## The Argus Institute Team:

Erin Allen, MSSW – Clinical Counselor  
Gail Bishop, BS – Clinical Coordinator  
Del Rae Heiser, BS – Program Coordinator  
Lisa Hunter, BS – MSW Intern  
Carrie Katona – Work Study Student  
Jane Shaw, DVM, PhD – Director

## Contact Information:

Argus Institute  
Colorado State University  
College of Veterinary Medicine  
and Biomedical Sciences  
James L. Voss Veterinary Teaching Hospital  
300 W. Drake Rd.  
Ft. Collins, CO 80523  
Support Line: (970) 297-1242  
Office Line: (970) 297-4143  
Fax: (970) 297-4201  
E-mail: [argus@colostate.edu](mailto:argus@colostate.edu)  
Website: [www.argusinstitute.colostate.edu](http://www.argusinstitute.colostate.edu)

## What Now? Support for You and Your Companion Animal

The Argus Institute's new comprehensive guide supports clients through the difficult journey that begins with hearing that their animal is ill, offering strategies for evaluating healthcare choices, assessing quality of life, making end of life decisions and coping with loss. Contact us directly to order this resource for your clients.



# American Association of Human-Animal Bond Veterinarians North American Veterinary Conference

**Gaylord Hotel, and Conference Center,  
Monday, January 19, 2009, Orlando, Florida**

## **The Human-Animal Bond in Practice, and Community Service Moderator: John Wright, DVM**

Time	Topic / Title	Speaker
8:00 - 8:50	Human-Animal Bond: Practice, and Community Service	Tami Shearer, DVM
9:00 - 9:50	Pet Hospice in Practice	Tami Shearer, DVM
9:50 - 10:10	Break	Break
10:10 - 11:00	Supporting the Bond; End of Life Communication	Jane Shaw, DVM, PhD
11:10 - 12:00	Emergency, Practice, and the Human-Animal Bond	Justine Lee, DVM, DACVECC
12:00 - 1:45	Lunch Break	Lunch Break
1:45 - 2:35	Shelter Veterinary Medicine; The Greatest Challenges	Lila Miller, DVM
2:45 - 3:35	Emerging societal concern for farm animals: What is happening and what veterinary medicine must do to retain societal credibility	Bernard Rollin, PhD
3:35 - 3:55	Break	Break
3:55 - 4:50	The Human-Animal Bond: Veterinary Practice, & Community Service; A Discussion	Panel - All speakers, and Audience



The American Association of  
Human-Animal Bond Veterinarians  
Dr. Tom Krall  
St. Petersburg College  
P.O. Box 13489  
St. Petersburg, Florida 33733

Join the AAH-ABV online at [www.aahabv.org](http://www.aahabv.org),  
or fill out the form below:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Specialty Board Certification \_\_\_\_\_

Alma Mater \_\_\_\_\_ Year Graduated \_\_\_\_\_

AVMA Member  Yes  No Other Associations \_\_\_\_\_

Your Interest Areas \_\_\_\_\_

Dues (check one)

Member Veterinarian (\$35)

Associate Member Non Veterinarian (\$35)

Student Applicant (\$10)

(Please have a faculty member sign below to certify that you are a member  
of the class of \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

Faculty Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### Mission Statement

- To further awareness of the human-animal bond
- To further scientific progress in the area of the human-animal bond
- To further educational opportunities in the area of the human-animal bond
- To encourage veterinary participation in human-animal bond activities with related organizations and disciplines
- To explore the potential for establishing a veterinary specialty in the area of the human-animal bond

**\*All AAH-ABV members will be listed in the directory unless the member specifies otherwise. Please write checks to AAH-ABV and send them to Dr. Tom Krall, St. Petersburg College, PO Box 13489, St. Petersburg, Florida 33733**