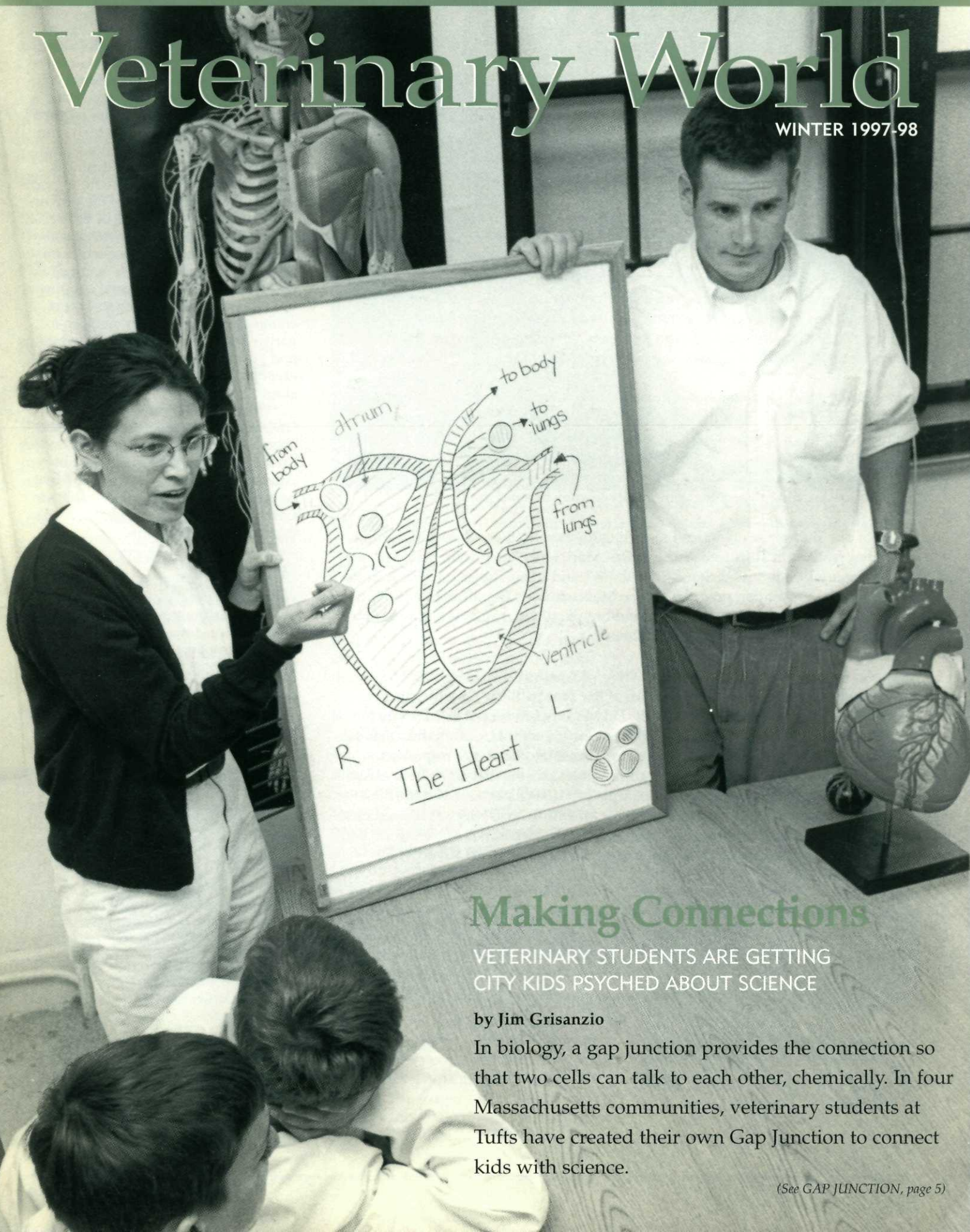


# Veterinary World

WINTER 1997-98



## Making Connections

VETERINARY STUDENTS ARE GETTING CITY KIDS PSYCHED ABOUT SCIENCE

by Jim Grisanzio

In biology, a gap junction provides the connection so that two cells can talk to each other, chemically. In four Massachusetts communities, veterinary students at Tufts have created their own Gap Junction to connect kids with science.

(See GAP JUNCTION, page 5)





# DEAN

by Philip C. Kosch

## MEMBERS OF OUR FAMILY ARE INNOVATING, SUCCEEDING

Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine is unified in a common purpose, and that is to provide an environment in which individual members model the best in themselves through their compassionate care of animals and their contributions to animal health, welfare and conservation.

We also take pride in our entrepreneurial culture and leadership position, having pioneered numerous innovative programs of societal importance. While much of our success is due to our creative and energetic faculty and staff, I am exceedingly proud of similar contributions by our students and alumni/ae. There are many individual success stories of those members of our Tufts family who are committed to giving back to their profession and to society. In this issue of *Veterinary World*, we highlight a few of these. There are many more to be sure.

Through the effective leadership of two of our wonderful students, Stephanie Wong and Duffy Jones, and the generous faculty sponsorship of Dr. Bob Murtaugh, a large group of Tufts veterinary students is engaged in an educational community service program called Gap Junction. This is a student-initiated and run program that has won wide acclaim. In addition to community outreach, our veterinary students are learning to become community leaders beyond graduation.

Many of our alumni/ae are indeed modeling the best in themselves and putting what they learned at Tufts into practice. Drs. Mark and Gail Mason, both V85, are entrepreneurial leaders. Drs. Steve Rowell, V83, and Alison Robbins, V92, lead the raccoon rabies prevention program for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Dr. Alicia Karas, V89, is at the forefront of pain management in veterinary patients in our teaching hospitals and clinics.

We are also very proud of Drs. Mark Pokras, V83, and Michael McGuill, V91. Dr. McGuill has been named Veterinarian of the Year by the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Dr. McGuill has served as the State Public Health Veterinarian since 1992. He is honored for his contributions to the establishment of rational and humane public policies governing the state's response to rabies and other zoonotic diseases (communicable diseases that affect both animals and people). Dr. Pokras, V83, director of Tufts Wildlife Clinic, received the First Annual Veterinary Alumni Association Achievement Award, which was presented in September at the school's annual Open House. Dr. Pokras is a fine clinician and teacher and was recognized as an outstanding mentor and as an advocate for wildlife medicine.

In closing, I pay tribute to the memory of one of our friends. We mourn the loss of one of the school's earliest supporters and advocates and longtime member of its Board of Overseers, Lloyd B. Waring of Rockport, Mass., whose commitment and enthusiasm helped put the school on a firm foundation. The Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine community extends our condolences to the Waring family.

## BIOTECHNOLOGY LEADER APPOINTED OVERSEER

Gabriel Schmergel, former president and chief executive officer of Genetics Institute Inc., a Cambridge, Mass., biopharmaceutical company, has been appointed to Tufts University's Board of Overseers for Veterinary Medicine.

Tufts' overseers are national and international leaders from business, academia and other fields who provide assistance and guidance to the university's president and Board of Trustees. Their direction to the university community in their distinct areas of focus influences Tufts' advances in curricula and research. The overseers' support has helped Tufts maintain its "most competitive" admissions standards, garner research funds from foundations and government and secure a ranking among the top tier of American universities.

Schmergel served as president and CEO of Genetics Institute from 1981, shortly after the company was founded, until 1996, when it was acquired by American Home Products. Before that, he spent 14 years at Baxter Healthcare Corp., eventually managing the firm's international operations.

### On the cover:

*Tufts veterinary students Stephanie Wong and Duffy Jones, both V99, talk biology with middle school students at the Paraclete Center in South Boston. Jones and Wong last year recognized the need for more science education in inner-city schools and created Gap Junction, a program that not only teaches children and fosters more community awareness of science but benefits Tufts students as well.*

Photo by Mark Morelli

T U F T S U N I V E R S I T Y

## Veterinary World

Winter 1997-98

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## VETERINARY PRACTICE TAKES ON PAIN MANAGEMENT

A few years ago an elderly man brought his Boston terrier to the veterinarian. The animal had an eye problem that was linked to an ear infection. The dog also needed some dental work.

This was one unhappy little terrier. So unhappy that he had to be muzzled and restrained during the examination and treatment.

But was the dog really grumpy? Was he really aggressive?

Not at all.

"When we got everything all cleared up, this dog was the nicest little guy around," said Dr. Alicia Karas, V89, the veterinarian who treated the dog and is now an anesthesiologist at Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine. "He was probably just experiencing a lot of pain that made him uncomfortable."

So began a veterinarian's interest in pain and how to manage it.

Veterinarians are becoming more sensitive to pain management as an important part of animal health care. At Tufts, veterinarians have included pain management in their research agendas, and they are teaching students about the condition.

Perception also has a lot to do with how much pain people and animals feel, Karas said.

"Look at the kid who falls off his bicycle and scrapes his knee. He'll look around to see if anyone is looking. If no one is, he may get back on the bike and ride off. Take that same child to the doctor, and he starts crying even before the needle pierces the skin. It's perception," Karas said.

Anxiety also can alter the perception of pain dramatically, she said.

"That dog crying in the other room," Karas said of a Labrador recovering from surgery. "He just had extensive dental surgery and was under anesthesia for hours. In many ways, he's like a pediatric patient. He just woke up. He's scared. His owner isn't here. And, yes, he's in some pain, but I think he's playing into his anxiety as well, which is exacerbating his situation.



*Dr. Alicia Karas, left, and fourth-year veterinary student Erin Harshberger-Bauer examine a cat. Karas teaches her students to carefully examine animals to learn how much pain is normal after procedures and when further treatment is needed.*

Photo by Mark Morelli

"But how do we explain all that to him?" Karas said. "This is a real challenge for veterinarians and students evaluating an animal for pain. The animal can't tell us where it hurts, so we have to be sensitive."

A student comforted the Lab as Karas explained that trust plays an important role in pain management. Some animals trust more than others, she said, and those are the ones that have an easier time recovering.

Karas teaches her students to look for indicators of pain and to know how much pain is normal after a particular procedure. In many instances, the best method to assess pain after surgery is a good physical exam.

"The most important thing is to touch the patient," Karas said. "I tell all my students to gently palpate their patients and explore. There are times when people come to me with a dog they say is in pain. But when I palpate the surgery site, the animal doesn't flinch. So it may be that the

animal is just anxious and experiencing all the associated fears of being hospitalized."

Tufts and other sophisticated veterinary medical centers perform dozens of advanced procedures that, by objective standards, would be considered painful: hip replacements, spinal fusion and heart surgery, to name a few. But just how painful these procedures are and how long animals experience pain is uncertain. Veterinarians at Tufts administer pain medication after major surgical procedures, and that practice is spreading.

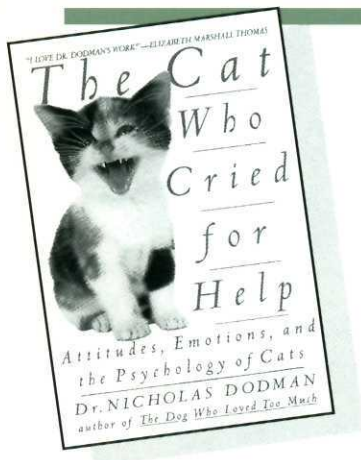
"It's easy to justify treating pain when you look at a suffering patient," Karas said. "Many things can affect an animal's perception of pain: drugs, sleep, food, grooming, nursing care, surgical technique — even full bladders."

Karas' research is funded through the Edna H. Tompkins Trust in Boston.

*Jim Grisanzio*



# BRIEFS



## CATS ON THE COUCH

In *The Cat Who Cried for Help*, Dr. Nicholas Dodman, director of the Animal Behavior Clinic at Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine, does for feline psychology what he did last year for canines in his widely acclaimed book, *The Dog Who Loved Too Much*.

In his latest book, published this fall by Bantam Books, Dodman discusses the fascinating and often-frustrating behaviors of one of our most popular — and certainly most independent — animal companions. He also shows how we can coexist peacefully with even the most stubborn cat.

What would you do about a cat determined to tear your sofa to shreds? Or one who gorges himself on your best running shoes? Or one who just refuses to use the litter box? Drawing on real-life cases from his clinical practice, Dodman discusses the successful treatment programs that have given problem cats a new lease on life — and their perplexed owners

long-term solutions to even the most intractable behavior disorders.

Dodman shows how adjustments in diet, exercise and environment can resolve almost any feline behavior problem. For more serious conditions, Dodman may prescribe behavior-modifying medications on a short-term basis to augment more traditional treatment methods.

From cat panic attacks to eating disorders, from litter box aversion to depression and a wide range of feline phobias, Dodman has successfully treated these and other behaviors.



## RABIES PROGRAM ENTERS NEW PHASE

Expanding on an already-successful raccoon rabies prevention program, veterinary scientists from Tufts distributed fish-meal baits containing an oral rabies vaccine in Plymouth and Wareham, Mass., in October to gauge whether the vaccine delivery system is effective in eliminating rabies from the raccoon population.

The pilot project, now in its fourth year, has prevented rabies from spreading to Cape Cod by creating an 80-square-mile "rabies vaccine zone" along the canal.

This fall's baiting program marks the first time scientists distributed the vaccine in areas where rabies is already established in an effort to eliminate the disease from the raccoon population. Twenty thousand fish-meal baits containing a genetically engineered oral raccoon rabies vaccine were distributed by hand along the sides of roads. The Massachusetts State Police provided helicopters to cover sparsely developed areas.

The program is funded through summer 1998 by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

"This program is good for the animal population while addressing public concerns over the spread and control of rabies," said Dr. Steven L. Rowell, V83, co-principal investigator on the rabies project and director of the veterinary school's Division of Laboratories.

The project initially was proposed by Cape Cod's legislative delegation.

## DISTINGUISHED PRACTITIONER



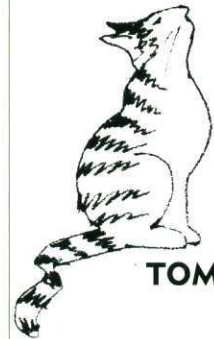
Dr. Linda Ross  
Photo by Mark Morelli

Dr. Linda Ross, associate dean for clinical programs and hospital director at the veterinary school, has been elected a Distinguished Practitioner in Veterinary Medicine by the National Academy of Practice.

The National Academy of Practice is an interdisciplinary health policy forum comprising 100 elected members in each of nine

academies (dentistry, medicine, nursing, optometry, osteopathic medicine, podiatric medicine, psychology, social work and veterinary medicine).

Distinguished practitioners are chosen by their peers and have spent a significant portion of their careers in the direct delivery of health care to clients.



**HAIR TODAY,  
GONE TOMORROW!**

Each time your cat licks its fur with its Velcro-textured tongue, it's likely to ingest a dozen or more hairs, according to a recent issue of *Catnip*, a newsletter published by Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine. And each hair could contribute to a future hairball. To help prevent hairballs from forming, groom your cat regularly. Here are a few tips:

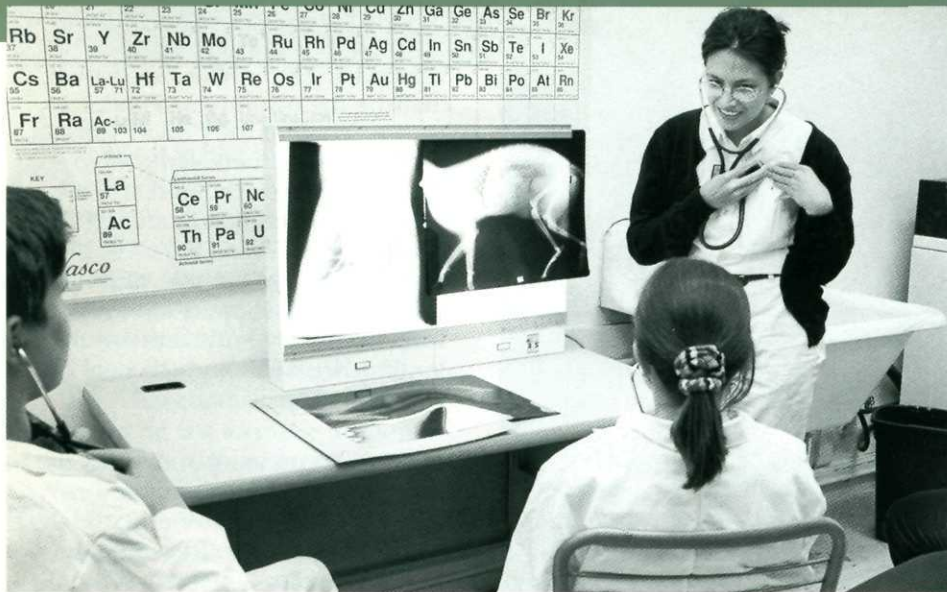
- Groom twice a week if your cat is long-haired and once a week if it's short-haired.
- Use a fine, steel-toothed comb. That way you'll not only cull the loose hairs from the top layer of the cat's coat but also the hairs from the undercoat.
- Comb with and against the lay of the fur.

If your cat is a chronic hairball sufferer, ask your veterinarian about using petroleum jelly or a commercial hairball remedy to help ingested hair move smoothly along the intestinal tract.

For *Catnip* subscription information, call (800) 829-0926.



## GAP JUNCTION CONNECTS STUDENTS TO SCIENCE



Stephanie Wong, V99, shows her young students how to listen to the heart beat.

Photo by Mark Morelli

(Continued from page 1)

"Many inner-city schools are unable to secure funds for the latest science equipment," said Stephanie Wong, V99, co-coordinator of Gap Junction, which teaches science to middle school students in Worcester, Grafton, South Boston and Roxbury.

"After my experience from teaching science to kids in San Diego," Wong said, "I thought children would benefit from our knowledge and what Tufts has to offer, including radiographs, microscopes and other state-of-the-art scientific equipment."

In all, more than 100 students from 16 middle schools have participated in Gap Junction. The after-

school program runs one day a week for four weeks and provides interactive education at either the Tufts veterinary school campus in Grafton or the Paraclete Center in South Boston. Lectures, activities and hands-on labs cover everything from cellular biology and the musculoskeletal system to the digestive system and the respiratory and cardiovascular systems.

Gap Junction has three goals: To excite middle school children about science; to give Tufts' veterinary students an opportunity to use their professional skills and to increase the interaction between health professional schools and the community.

"The program is really good because it is not only great for community service, but it also helps us as well," said Duffy Jones, V99, co-coordinator of the program. "While the kids are learning science from us, we are learning communication skills that will be beneficial later in our careers. The Gap Junction program is a two-way street, where we learn as much as the kids."

"Absolutely," Wong said. "We usually teach 12-year-olds complex scientific concepts and medical terminology that we learn in class the day before! It's a challenge. If veterinary students can do that, they have increased their ability to communicate effectively with clients in the future."

Gap Junction has been funded by the Massachusetts Campus Compact, a statewide organization of college presidents, and the Colleges of Worcester Consortium. Currently 22 Tufts veterinary students participate in Gap Junction. Wong and Jones are trying to solicit more student volunteers from Tufts' schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine.

"The kids are great," Wong said. "In class one day a student suddenly realized, 'Oh my gosh, I can do this! No one has ever told me that I could do science before.' That kind of a reaction makes me feel great. It's absolutely inspirational. But what's even better is that every veterinary student taking part in the program has a story like that."

## Alumni honored at White House

When Drs. Mark and Gail Mason graduated from Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine in 1985, they had no plans to open a practice of their own.

Times change.

The husband-and-wife veterinary team, who live and work in Brunswick, Maine, run one of the largest private general and referral practices in the Northeast. They and other small business entrepreneurs from the 50 states were honored by Vice President Al Gore at a White House ceremony earlier this year.

The Masons were nominated for the award by the U.S. Small Business Administration and Fleet Bank.

"It was quite an honor," Mark Mason said. "When we came out of veterinary school, we really had no plans of running our own business. But after working several years for someone else, we wanted to bring the referral aspect of veterinary medicine to small towns."

Two years ago, the Masons took out a \$700,000 loan from the Small Business Administration for a major

expansion of their hospital. The Masons took over the practice in 1989 when it had eight employees. They have quadrupled the revenue, added 22 employees and now see more than 20,000 cases a year.

"This award has really opened some people's eyes. They see that this is not only a profession but a business as well," Mark Mason said.

Next month the Masons and their hospital will be featured in an entrepreneurial video production by *Fortune* magazine.



## A record-breaking year for the Tufts Veterinary Fund

Making a gift to the Tufts Veterinary Fund is a meaningful way for people who care about animals to demonstrate their support of Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine and its mission of advancing animal health and veterinary education.

"I support the School of Veterinary Medicine because I am impressed with the dedication of the faculty, staff and students and with the innovation of Tufts' clinical and educational programs," says Agnes Varis, a member of the Veterinary Board of Overseers and the new chair of the Cotton Tufts Society, which recognizes leadership donors to the Tufts Veterinary Fund.

"My cats mean the world to me," Varis says, "and like many animal owners, I am reassured knowing that Tufts is educating competent and compassionate veterinarians as well as helping to expand our understanding of animal nutrition, behavior and disease."

"Tufts students and faculty also become involved with the more contemporary aspects of veterinary medicine, including animal and public policy studies and wildlife and conservation issues," she says. "And, the intellectual vitality at Tufts is fostering scientific advances that are important to both animal and human health."

Critical to Tufts' ability to offer innovative clinical and educational programs is the Tufts Veterinary Fund. "The fund provides a steady flow of flexible funds that enable Tufts to respond to new initiatives," Varis says, and supports areas where operating needs are greatest, such as student financial aid, equipment for the hospitals and maintenance of animal care facilities.

During the 1996-97 phase of the *Tufts Tomorrow* campaign, the Tufts Veterinary Fund achieved a record \$973,486 in unrestricted support. Leadership donors — members of the Cotton Tufts Society and Amelia Peabody Associates — contributed nearly two-thirds of that total.

"Gifts of all sizes are important. The thousands of smaller donations received contribute significantly," Varis says.

The Tufts Veterinary Fund also relies on gifts from parents and grad-

uates. Mary Jo and Edward Maier, V98P, whose daughter, Kim, is a fourth-year student, are chairing the Parents Fund. Dr. Wendy Emerson, V85, who is a past president of the Veterinary Alumni/ae Association, is chairing the Alumni/ae Fund.

"As chair of the Cotton Tufts Society, it is my personal goal to see the Tufts Veterinary Fund achieve more than \$1 million in annual support this year," Varis says. "I call upon all of Tufts' friends, alumni/ae and parents to support the 1997-98 Tufts Veterinary Fund and ensure the continued growth of the School of Veterinary Medicine."

• • •

Thank you to all of the friends, parents and alumni/ae who contributed to the Tufts Veterinary Fund from July 1, 1996, to June 30, 1997.

Although space limits our ability to list every donor to the fund, leadership donors of \$1,000 and above are listed here.

Special thanks go to our volunteer chairs who have served for the past two years — Dr. Catherine C. Lastavica, veterinary overseer and Cotton Tufts Society chair; Connie and Craig Weatherup, V97P, Parents Fund chairs; and Dr. David J. McGrath III, G83, V86, veterinary overseer and Alumni/ae Fund chair.



Veterinary Overseer Agnes Varis, the new chair of the Cotton Tufts Society, and Tufts President John DiBiaggio.

Photo by J.D. Sloan

### The Cotton Tufts Society

*The President's Circle*  
(\$25,000 and above)

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Miss Louise I. Doyle  
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Ms. Agnes Varis\*

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Mrs. Catherine & John Lastavica\*  
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Mr. & Mrs. Craig Weatherup, V97P  
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Mrs. Nathaniel T. Winthrop  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Winthrop  
Dr. & Mrs. Frank W. Zak, V42V

\* Member, Board of Overseers to the School of Veterinary Medicine

\*\*Deceased



## 'DOC' SHEEHAN'S BET ON TUFTS HAS PAID OFF

Ask Dr. Risé Sheehan, V89, what it is like to practice veterinary medicine with her father-in-law, Dr. Richard Sheehan, and she'll give you a look of amusement at how anybody could ask anything so obvious. "I wouldn't want to work with anyone else," she says. "He's the best in his field."

"Doc" Sheehan shrugs off such praise. But he is a former president of the American Association of Equine Practitioners. And the New England Turf Writers Association recently named him its 1997 Man of the Year. "I guess it was my turn," he says.

While he may be self-effacing about his personal achievements, Sheehan is serious about his field, equine practice, and about advancing veterinary medical education at Tufts University.

Educated at the University of Massachusetts and the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell, Sheehan was involved in the development of Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine in the mid-1970s and has continued to support the institution.

He endowed the Sheehan Library Fund for equine books and periodicals. ("When the school first opened, I could hardly find a book on horses there," he says.) He created the Sheehan Equine Award ("for the student who has done the best work in equine medicine and surgery.") He's past chairman of the school's annual giving club (now the Cotton Tufts Society) and current chairman of the Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) Scholarship Loan Fund. ("We just gave a \$100,000 gift to Tufts' scholarship endowment fund," he says.)

Additionally, a third-year veterinary student will receive a grant from another fund — the first Dr. James Dewitt Scholarship — named for the long-time chair of the MVMA's loan funds board.

"I've been supportive because my education has done so much for



*In the stable at their equine-only practice in Mansfield, Mass., from left, Drs. Risé Sheehan, V89, Dick Sheehan, V88, and Richard "Doc" Sheehan.*

Photo by Mark Morelli

me," Sheehan says. "It has let me do exactly what I wanted to do."

As a boy he worked at Suffolk Downs in Massachusetts, demonstrating at an early age a certain facility with thoroughbreds, which, he says, "some people treat as dynamite because they're so darn quick."

Sheehan has operated an equine-only practice on his 30-plus acre home/stable/hospital complex in Mansfield, Mass. He works with Risé and her husband — Sheehan's son, Dick Sheehan, V88.

"Doc" never hung out a shingle. Never had to. Word of mouth kept him in business, of which about 85 percent is conducted at Suffolk Downs (where 1,200 horses are usually stabled) or at Rockingham Park in New Hampshire.

He never bets on the ponies, saying that if he supports one trainer's horse over another, it would not be ethical.

He did, however, place a bet of sorts on Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine when it was but a sketch on a drawing board 20 years ago.

Sheehan says that long shot has paid off very well for the profession he loves.

"The students from Tufts who come out with me to the tracks are so impressive," he says. "Their scientific backgrounds are first-rate, and they're good people. You don't get into veterinary medicine for the money. If you sit down with a pen and paper and figure out what it costs and then see what's at the end of it all waiting for you — well, it sometimes can be bleak, money-wise. People get into it for reasons other than money, and that makes all the difference."

*John LoDico*

**If you would like to support the School of Veterinary Medicine through the Tufts Tomorrow campaign, contact Shelley Rodman, director of veterinary development, at (508) 839-7907 or e-mail her at [srodman@infonet.tufts.edu](mailto:srodman@infonet.tufts.edu)**



P H O T O

# FINISH

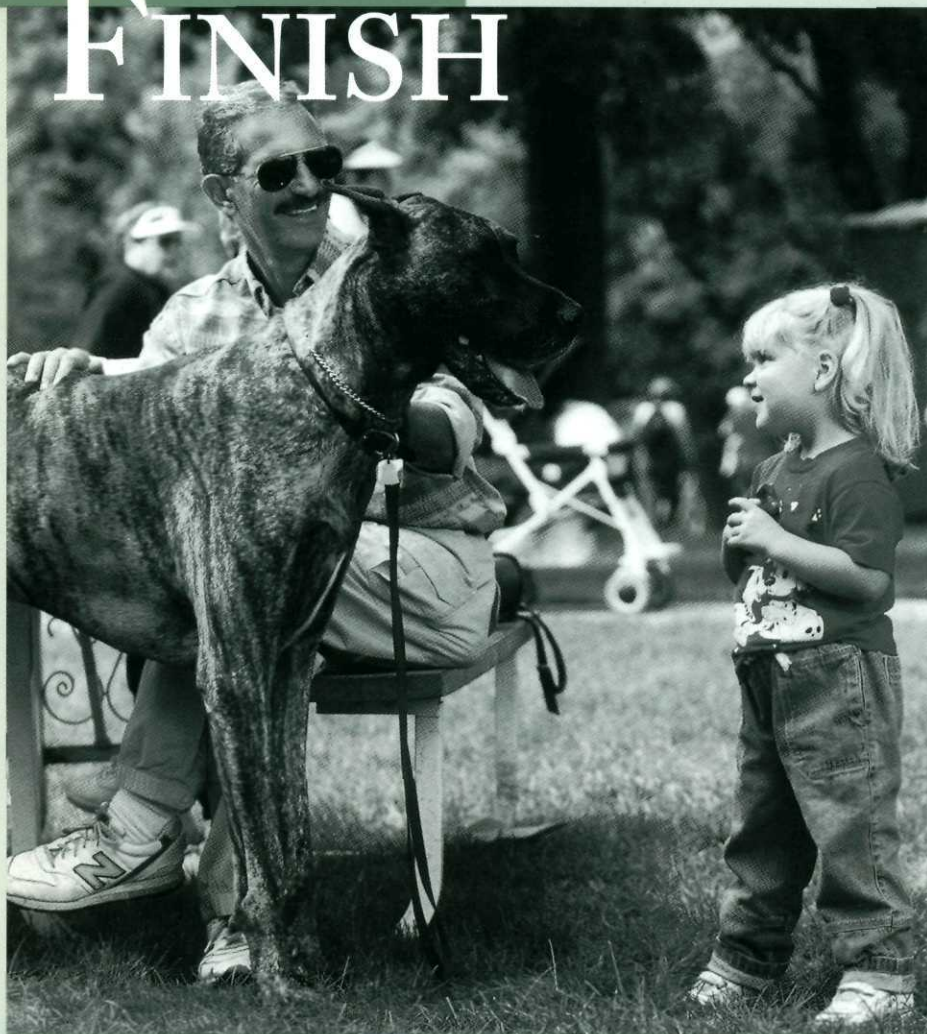


Photo by Rob Weisman

## MAKING FRIENDS

Thousands of animal lovers from throughout New England came to check out Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine and see the work of its veterinarians and scientists as well as state-of-the-art clinical facilities, including the Henry and Lois Foster Hospital for Small Animals, during the 14th annual open house September 6 on the Grafton campus. The day-long event, sponsored by Hills Pet Nutrition Inc. and *Catnip and Your Dog*, featured self-guided tours, multimedia demonstrations, information for prospective veterinary students and fun activities for the kids. Here a young visitor gets acquainted with a Great Dane.

### Veterinary World

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