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Grassroots Efforts Make Significant Impact

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special gifts to the school

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Grassroots Efforts Make Significant Impact

Friends share their talents to keep Penn Vet at the forefront of veterinary medicine and research

BY SUSAN MILLER

Since Penn Vet's inception more than 125 years ago, the generosity and support of many good friends has sustained our School and assured our future. These friends – donors, clients, alumni, students, faculty, animal lovers and more – give of their time and their talents. They entrust us with the care of their animals. And many dig deep to help us meet our financial needs.

Some friends find more creative ways to support Penn Vet and our mission of education, research and service.

Lemonade for a Cause

When school is out, the homework is set aside and extracurricular activities are on hiatus, how might four young ladies in Philadelphia fill their long, summer days? By setting up a lemonade stand and selling ice-cold lemonade to thirsty friends, neighbors and passersby.

That's exactly what Rachael and Emma Hunter, Teagan and Maggie Kirby and Leah Graham all did one warm summer day. At the end of the day, these entrepreneurs donated their profits to the Matthew J. Ryan



The Hunter girls spend some time with feline kidney donors during their tour of Ryan-VHUP.



Maryjo Smith's Bruiser Memorial 5K Run is an annual fundraiser for canine cancer research at Penn Vet.

Veterinary Hospital at the University of Pennsylvania (Ryan-VHUP) to help sick pets.

Rachael and Emma's father is Dr. Christopher Hunter, chair of Penn Vet's Pathobiology Department. Entrusted with the girls' profits, he brought their donation to the Development Office where the dollar bills and coins were credited to the Friends of Ryan Hospital Fund. The girls were very happy to learn that their gift helped us treat not only dogs and cats but birds, reptiles and fish.

After their generous donation, the girls came to campus to tour the place they had helped and to get a first-hand look at the hard work their donation allows our veterinarians to do. Of particular interest on the tour were the feline kidney donors, where the five spent much of their time with Lynne Beale, a renal transplant nurse, and the cats, giving plenty of thankful snuggles to these heroic felines.

Running through the Pain

Shortly before Thanksgiving in 2008, Maryjo Smith of Allentown, PA got the news no pet owner ever wants to hear: Her dog Bruiser had been diagnosed with hemangiosarcoma, an aggressive and common cancer in dogs that originates in the endothelium (the lining of blood

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vessels and spleen). Sadly, Bruiser, a shepherd-mix, had a few short weeks before his illness took his life. Devastated by the loss of her good friend and long-time running companion, Maryjo vowed to do something about it.

The result was the inaugural Bruiser Memorial 5K Run held along the Lehigh-Allentown Parkway on September 12, 2009.

An avid runner, Maryjo had participated in many races but being the sole organizer of the Bruiser 5K was a new experience. Marketing the race, coordinating a timing system, managing entries and fees, asking for donations of ice and water, plus hundreds of additional details consumed her free time for the better part of the year.

On race day, her efforts paid off. More than 100 runners came out on a drizzly morning to hit the pavement. Some came just to run, but many came because they had something in common with Maryjo: They had also lost a beloved pet to cancer.

In the end, Maryjo's tireless commitment in Bruiser's memory raised \$8,000, which she generously directed to Penn Vet's study of cell-based cancer vaccines led by Dr. Nicola Mason.

Her second-year at the 5K run was even more successful. Held on September 25, Maryjo's efforts paid back nearly three-fold with a total donation of more than \$20,000, which, again, she donated for Dr. Mason's research.



Friends with Vision

Another good friend of Penn Vet is Dr. Christopher Anastasiou, ophthalmologist and owner of The Modern Eye, two boutique eye glass stores in Philadelphia. In addition to being a Penn Vet donor for a decade, Dr. Anastasiou's dogs have been clients at Ryan-VHUP.

Like Maryjo, Dr. Anastasiou has lost a dog to cancer. He knows all too well that although there are new treatments that may prolong the life of a pet for a short time, cancer, in the end, is a devastating disease.



Buddy and Lucky encourage customers to donate spare change to Penn Vet.

If you visit Dr. Anastasiou's Walnut Street store on the Penn campus, you'll find a big piggy bank on the counter. Next to it is a photograph of his two dogs, Buddy and Lucky, with an invitation to make a donation to support canine cancer research at Penn Vet.

As the piggy bank is filled up by patients and visitors to the store, the money collected is donated to Penn Vet and the Canine Cancer Research Fund. This fund supports research projects at Ryan-VHUP and encourages our veterinarians, veterinary students, interns and residents to engage in clinical investigations of various forms of cancers with which patients present.

All Gifts, Big and Small

Working from the heart, each of these wonderful friends found a non-traditional way to support Penn Vet and the work of our veterinarians, researchers and students.

It is through both traditional and non-traditional support that Penn Vet is able to lead the way in developing new treatments, build state-of-the-art clinical facilities, continue essential and necessary research of diseases that affect both animals and humans, attract and retain the highest caliber of faculty, staff and students and help future veterinarians fund their education and training.

If you are interested in learning how you can support Penn Vet's students, research and clients, please contact Melissa von Stade, assistant dean of Development, Alumni Relations and Communication, at 215-898-1480 or mstade@vet.upenn.edu. 🐾

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