

In Praise of 'People with the Passion'

Ted Johnson grew up in Naperville. He worked as a veterinary assistant throughout high school and during college breaks. He earned a bachelor's degree in animal science, graduating with honors from the University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign. After he graduates from the College of Veterinary Medicine in May, Ted plans to pursue an internship and residency in small animal internal medicine.

Linnea Olson, from Dolton, enjoys being in the inaugural class for the Illinois Integrated Veterinary Professional Curriculum, the Class of 2013, not only because of the early clinical experiences for students but also because of the emphasis on communication and interpersonal skills. She says she has "a passion for education of the public on animal welfare issues."

I thought you might like to "meet" the students who are benefiting from the scholarships sponsored by the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association. On April 2, Linnea received the CVMA Scholarship and Ted received the CVMA President's Scholastic Award. They were among the nearly 200 students receiving a combined \$444,000 on that day.

I am proud of the amount of assistance we can provide our students through scholarships, and I want to see the number of recipients and the amount of support go up every year. All 480 students are deserving of encouragement and assistance as they pursue their passion for joining the veterinary profession.

Unfortunately there is another number that goes up every year: the average educational debt for veterinary graduates. In our Class of 2010, students entered veterinary school with a mean educational debt of \$10,297 and graduated with a mean debt of \$119,054. Half had debt greater than \$132,500. A January article on veterinary student debt published in the VIN News Service quotes Dr. Marguerite Pappaioanou, executive director of the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges, as saying "We need to address costs through more scholarships, government funding or loan forgiveness programs so that people with the passion to pursue veterinary medicine aren't deterred by the price tag of this highly valued degree."

Luckily there is another group of people with a passion, and those are donors.

Individuals and organizations create veterinary scholarships for many reasons. Some, like CVMA and the 21 graduating classes who have pooled resources to endow a scholarship, want to invest in the future of the veterinary profession. Other donors are expressing appreciation for the veterinary services their animals have received or honoring or memorializing a loved one. A generous bequest and new scholarship established last year by Dr. Sheldon and Mrs. Paulette Rubin allows them to give back to the profession that was so much a part of their lives and to leave a lasting tribute.

I hope you will consider how you can become one of the passionate supporters of students and make the scholarship dollars grow. Whether through identifying a grateful client, rallying classmates to establish a gift, or making a gift independently, everyone can contribute in some way to encourage students. If you'd like assistance in finding out how, please contact Brenda Betts at 217-333-5545 or send an email to me at dean@vetmed.illinois.edu.