

Thank Your Vet for a Healthy Pet Regional Winners

CAT FANCY and DOG FANCY are pleased to announce the regional finalists in the 2008 Thank Your Vet for a Healthy Pet contest.

Posted: Jan. 14, 2009, 3 a.m. EST

Lee Morgan, DVM — Northeast finalist
Georgetown Veterinary Hospital
Washington, D.C.
Nominators: Mary Lynn Reed and Scott Sonntag

To Dr. Lee Morgan of Georgetown Veterinary Hospital in Washington, D.C., helping animals is much more than a job — it's his life.

In his 12 years as a veterinarian, Morgan has proven time and again just how passionate he is about his work. Not only is he a finalist in CAT FANCY and DOG FANCY's 2008 Thank Your Vet contest, but Morgan was a runner-up in Hartz Mountain Corp.'s Veterinarian of the Year contest in 2005 and was named Practitioner of the Year by the American Veterinary Medical Association in 2005.

Morgan has been the sole practitioner and owner of Georgetown Veterinary Hospital since 2002. From his first day there, it was clear to his patients that Morgan would uphold the practice's stellar reputation — and he has.

Nominators Mary Lynn Reed and Scott Sonntag can attest to Morgan's unparalleled dedication. When their Golden Retriever, Connor, needed surgery, Morgan brought Connor home with him afterward so that he could watch over him day and night until the puppy was well enough to return home. Reed and Sonntag's other dogs have received the same extraordinary care, as have countless other pets through Morgan's participation in charities such as Guide Dogs for the Blind and the Washington Humane Society, among others.

Morgan's most memorable client was an elderly Polish man who was held at a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. While there, the man befriended a stray cat who gave him the hope he needed to survive the horrors of internment. The client credited this cat with saving his life, and decided to repay it after he gained his freedom by taking in any and all stray cats he came across. Morgan, in turn, credits this client with teaching him humility and the importance of helping others.

Morgan started out as a dolphin and sea lion trainer, but felt that veterinary work would be more satisfying and decided to change his career. Each and every day, Morgan says, he must bring his "A" game to work, and he loves it. Every day is different, and Morgan finds great joy in helping not only pets, but their humans, as well.

T. Lamar Walker, DVM — Southeast finalist
Highland Animal Hospital
Augusta, Ga.
Nominator: Pat Burtt

Dr. T. Lamar Walker of Highland Animal Hospital in Augusta, Ga., was nominated in the 2008 Thank Your Vet for a Healthy Pet contest by Pat Burtt, one of his clients. She has taken her pets to Walker for years.

"He is the most dedicated veterinarian that I have ever known," Burtt says. "He has been there for me when my animals have been in crises. He has pulled my animals through when other vets have given up on them. He always makes me feel welcome and that I am not overreacting when my animals have been ill. I have been guilty of running to his clinic without an appointment if I felt my pet need him."

Walker has been a practicing veterinarian since 1981, and in those 27 years, he has done a lot to help the people and pets of his Georgia community. Along with hectic schedule of appointments, Walker finds the time to help out with rabies and microchip clinics for the local animal-welfare societies in Georgia.

Walker is very active in other aspects of his community, and has given of his time and talents to help develop Georgia's first disaster relief protocol. He has also served as Boy Scout headmaster and leader, and rehabilitates wildlife (and is the only

licensed vet in the area that does this). And if that wasn't enough, Walker has been the director-judge for the area's science fair for the last 18 years. All this love, compassion and sense of service to his community is apparent in his practice.

"Dr. Walker forms a bond with not only the pets who come in to see him, but also with the pet owners like me," Burt says. "There is no other vet around that is as good with people and with their pets."

Lisa Willis, DVM — Southwest finalist
Great Oaks Animal Hospital
Round Rock, Texas

Nominator: Sally Rau McIntosh on behalf of Greyhound Pets of America, Central Texas Chapter

Dr. Lisa Willis, in addition to the countless animals she treats on a daily basis in her practice, has been working for more than a decade with the Central Texas chapter of Greyhound Pets of America in its effort to find loving homes for adoptive Greyhounds.

When Willis' predecessor as the primary veterinarian for GPA Central Texas passed away, she had big shoes to fill, but in the ensuing years she has done so with great compassion and skill. Willis has dedicated countless hours to GPA Central Texas and helped with issues ranging from aggression, unexpected puppies and cancer, and never hesitates to provide advice on this unique breed. "She knows more about Greyhounds than anyone else I have come in contact with," says Sally Rau McIntosh, who serves as GPA Central Texas placement coordinator.

Willis has also given generous discounts to GPA Central Texas, as it is a nonprofit organization, and never hesitates to find a more cost-effective treatment if possible. "She recognizes her limits and will willingly consult with or refer to specialists when it is appropriate to do so," says McIntosh.

McIntosh estimates that Willis has provided medical attention to more than 1,000 Greyhounds, and in doing so, given those dogs a second lease on life. Willis will exhaust every avenue to help an animal, even if the prognosis is grim. "She does not like to give up on a dog who still has possibilities," says McIntosh. "We both cried when one particular Greyhound had to be put down. Dr. Willis told me, 'I feel so bad for those [Greyhounds] who never had a home.'" Even with a busy practice, she finds time to help similar adoption groups and her ultimate goal is always to find the right home for adoptive animals.

David Bainbridge, DVM — Midwest finalist
Morris Veterinary Hospital
Morris, Ill.
Nominator: Sara J. Grosso

Sara J. Grosso, who nominated Dr. David Bainbridge in the 2008 Thank Your Vet for a Healthy Pet contest, wanted to take the opportunity "to let him know that, to me, he really, really is the world's greatest vet."

According to Grosso, Bainbridge's quality of veterinary care is equaled only by his warm and expert approach with his clients. "He can make folks feel at ease with his great bedside manner and wonderful sense of humor," Grosso said. "But when it comes to anything serious, he becomes the highly professional doctor."

Grosso also applauds Bainbridge's ability to empathize with his clients when difficult decisions, such as when a pet must be euthanized, have to be made. "When it is time for your 'furry baby' to not suffer anymore, he becomes a man of compassion and cries along with you, which will endear you to him forever."

Bainbridge also provided full care for Grundy County Sheriff Department's canine officer, German Shepherd dog Britt, who he helped purchase after the previous canine officer, also a patient of Bainbridge's, retired from duty.

Bainbridge's dedication to helping animals extends beyond his office to the great outdoors. As a state- and federally licensed wildlife rehabilitator, Bainbridge treats and rehabilitates various animals that inhabit Grundy County, Ill., including Arctic geese, heron, foxes, hawks, parrots and raccoons, several that live near Bainbridge and his own pets.

To read about the national winner, Rachel S. Boltz, DVM, of Los Altos, Calif., pick up the March 2009 issue of CAT FANCY magazine.