

# Florida VETERINARIAN

ADVANCING ANIMAL, HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

## UF | College of Veterinary Medicine

### Alumna on the move in pet-care business

By Sarah Carey

“ I think mobile practice is an area of veterinary medicine that is going to continue to grow in the future.

— Dr. Dena Baker

As the owner of three businesses, all conceived and developed within the past seven years, Dena Baker, D.V.M., '00, is hardly risk-averse. She's independent and not afraid to pursue a dream, if she thinks that ultimately her clients and the veterinary profession will benefit. Yet as a member of the Gator Nation, Baker feels both grounded and proud of UF's commitment to create a community of veterinarians who can work together.

Her business philosophy can be summed up by the phrase “See a need, fill a need,” which was popularized in the 2005 animated movie, “Robots.”

The college's 2010 Alumni Achievement Award winner, Baker started her first business, Mobile Pet Vet, after working for three years at Harborside Animal Clinic in Naples, where she enjoyed learning from Drs. Larry Coen and Bob March.

“Dr. Coen had been practicing for 30 years and was an amazing person who was masterful at developing client relationships,” Baker said. “I have tried to pattern my interactions with clients after him. Dr. March was also at the clinic and had great clinical skills and a passion for the Gators.”

But Baker soon reached a point where she realized it was time to branch out on her own.

She made plans to open a stationary practice, thinking that was what she was “supposed to do” – although she always had been attracted to the idea of working in a mobile practice.

As fate would have it, her lease did not work out, which Baker took as a sign. She decided to revert to her original

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Photo courtesy of Dr. Dena Baker

Dr. Dena Baker is shown with her dog, Gator, a dog she rescued after finding him running down the street in rain and traffic. The photo was taken outside of Baker's mobile clinic.

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Photos by Sarah Carey



Dean Glen Hoffsis

### Here when you need us

Events and plans associated with the grand opening of our new UF Small Animal Hospital have been moving quickly this year.

The new hospital is really taking shape now, and tours are becoming more exciting because the rooms and functions are clearly identifiable. The project is still on schedule, with several events planned around the time of our grand opening, including a public open house at the end of October. We plan to officially be open for business on November 1.

As we prepare to open our doors, all of us have spent a considerable amount of time rethinking our services, mission, and promotion. We have learned that many people in our own community did not know what our current name, Veterinary Medical Center, meant. So we have gone

back to UF Veterinary Hospitals, which we feel is simpler and more descriptive. Using the plural form indicates we have more than one hospital, namely the Alec and Louise Courtelis Equine Hospital and the UF Small Animal Hospital. We hope that someday soon this hospital will also bear a benefactor's name. We also evaluated our mission as it relates to external stakeholders and have developed a new tagline to reflect it: "Here When You Need Us."

We are redefining our focus and approach to the patient, client, and referring veterinarian. We have always provided exemplary patient care but now will add the same level of exemplary care to the client and referring veterinarian as well. At UF, we have much to offer and much to be proud of. As the only College of Veterinary Medicine in Florida, we provide education to the next generation of veterinarians and specialists as well as graduate education to researchers. We have more specialists and services under one roof than any specialty veterinary hospital in Florida. Among those services are Internal Medicine, Orthopedic Surgery, Soft tissue Surgery, Surgical Oncology, Medical Oncology, Radiation Oncology, Nutrition, Dermatology, Cardiology, Ophthalmology, Dentistry, Neurology, Shelter Medicine, Behavior, Anesthesiology, Clinical Pathology, Radiology, Rehabilitation, Acupuncture, and Emergency/Critical Care.

We will offer new equipment and capabilities to include MR and CT, nuclear medicine, a catheterization lab and a linear accelerator with cone-beam CT (image guidance) unique to Florida and most of the country. In addition, we will have rehabilitation equipment, dialysis, digital radiography, ultrasound, a video capture system for surgery and electronic medical records. Our state-of-the-art facility will be as well equipped as any veterinary hospital anywhere.

The hospital is still on schedule to open in October and there will be a flurry of various events around that time. I hope that all of you can attend one of these events and if not, we would welcome your visit at any time.

We have also made a significant administrative change in the hospitals. We maintained the two clinical sciences departments: Large Animal Clinical Sciences, chaired by Dr. David Freeman, and Small Animal Clinical Sciences, chaired by Dr. Colin Burrows. The chairs were previously responsible for academic components and also served as chief of staff of their respective hospitals. We have now separated the chief of staff responsibilities and created a new position to lead the professional aspects of both hospitals. The new chief of staff is Dr. Dana Zimmel, a well-respected, board-certified equine internist. A 1995 graduate of the UF CVM, Dr. Zimmel began her new responsibilities July 1, and we are confident this new structure will improve operations.

The college's strategic plan continues to be developed. Our new veterinary student enrollment management plan is already being implemented. Beginning their freshman year this fall will be 88 Florida residents and 12 non-residents, for a total of 100 new students. This represents an increase of 12 from our previous enrollment capacity. We have altered some of our facilities and employed more faculty in order to deliver what we think will be an even higher quality education to these students, our veterinarians of the future.

The contemporary topic in Florida is the oil spill disaster in the Gulf. The UF CVM has been very involved in evaluating the damage. Dr. Brian Stacy, a board certified veterinary pathologist who specializes in reptiles and other aquatic animals, is working with BP and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and has been in the Gulf almost continuously since the spill first occurred. Our Veterinary Emergency Treatment Service has also been deployed to help with the disaster. Hopefully these and many other efforts will help minimize the harm to the animals and the environment of the region.

As you can tell, the college is on the move and in a growth mode once again, in spite of the recession. As always, we appreciate your generous support and please remember that we are here when you need us.

Many thanks,



Glen Hoffsis  
Dean



Dean Glen Hoffsis stands near the main entrance area of the new UF Small Animal Hospital.



The main client reception desk just recently arrived and should be completed soon.



Operating room lights and booms will soon be installed.

plan and started Mobile Pet Vet, which she has now owned for seven years.

“I think mobile practice is an area of veterinary medicine that is going to continue to grow in the future,” Baker said, adding that last year she started a national organization for mobile practitioners, through which she presents a Webinar once a month to those currently practicing or interested in mobile practice.

“Having been a technician for many years, I had said many times, ‘Why don’t they have disposable fecal loops?’ After a while, I decided I would just see if I could do it myself,” Baker said. So she formed a business partnership with Innovative Veterinary Products, which services most major veterinary distributors in the United States and has also shipped to Canada.

“We have just come out with disposable otoscopic cones as well,” Baker said, adding that more disposable products are in the pipeline. “I think it is a trend that the veterinary profession is going to follow to limit liability and increase profit.”

When the melamine pet food recall occurred in 2008, Baker soon saw another need and an opportunity to fill it.

“I had a lot of clients ask me what to feed their cats and dogs,” she said. “I even had some people try to do things themselves and ended up treating their pets for nutritional deficiencies we rarely see.”

So Baker created a formula that is something an owner can make at home if they have time.

When she’s not working, tending to her existing businesses or dreaming of new ones – a high-end pet resort on the scale of Naples’ two Ritz Carlton hotels is in the works – Baker relaxes by skydiving, cycling and traveling. She has completed six century bike rides, including two for Team Vet Med in the Horse Farm Hundred.

Baker has also remained active in college life, serving on the CVM’s alumni council and most recently, the admissions committee. She is organizing the Class of 2000’s 10-year reunion, which will be held at the Sawgrass Marriott in Jacksonville the weekend of the Florida-Georgia game.

“It is very exciting to see the high caliber of veterinarians that UF has produced,” she said. “Not just as practitioners, but as members of their communities.”

## New society honors key donors

By Sarah Carey



Dean Glen Hoffsis, right, presented Dr. Paul Nicoletti, professor emeritus of infectious diseases, with a lapel pin after Nicoletti became the first Loyal Member of the Dean’s Circle of Excellence.

**A** new society has been created to acknowledge donors of \$5,000 or more to the UF College of Veterinary Medicine.

The Dean’s Circle of Excellence will offer special recognition to these individuals, as a way of thanking them for their support of the college’s ongoing efforts toward unparalleled educational and institutional excellence.

“We established the Dean’s Circle of Excellence as a way to thank our highest level supporters by offering the benefits of an exclusive club. Creating

additional opportunities to strengthen the bonds we have with our biggest supporters only helps our programs and our animal patients, who ultimately benefit from these donors’ largesse,” said Karen Legato, senior director of development and alumni affairs at the college.

Members receive a lapel pin, a certificate suitable for framing and displaying at home, in the office or in the clinic; invitations to select Dean’s Circle events; a listing in the honor roll of donors; inclusion in the Dean’s Circle directory on the college Web site and a special recognition plaque in the Dean’s Circle of Excellence Lecture Hall.

Lifetime members, who pledge \$25,000 or more (\$5,000 per year for five years), or who make a bequest gift of \$100,000 or more, also receive a naming opportunity. The lowest level of membership is in the Loyal Member category, which requires a pledge of \$5,000 (\$1,000 per year for five years.)

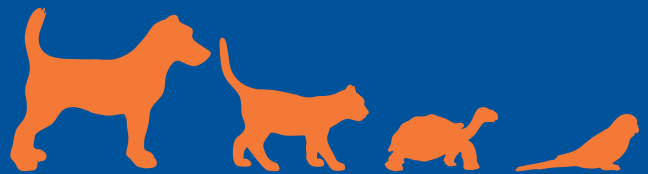
Since the program was announced in the spring, it already has two Lifetime member and 16 Loyal members, Legato said.

# UF SMALL ANIMAL HOSPITAL

**PLEASE JOIN US**

for an open house preview of our newly expanded facility!

**OCTOBER 24, 2010  
1 P.M. TO 4 P.M.**



**Here when you need us.**

## Former star jockey sets sights on future as large animal veterinarian

By Sarah Carey

When the TV series “Jockeys” ran on Animal Planet two years ago, new CVM graduate Ramon Perez was quite the hot commodity with his veterinary school classmates. That’s because for a three-year window in the 1990s, Perez himself was one of the biggest names in Thoroughbred horse racing.

“My classmates usually ask me things like, ‘what’s it like,’ or ‘what’s this mean,’” said Perez, who began a one-year internship at an equine practice near Sydney, Australia in June. “If you see a TV show for one afternoon, it can be confusing.”

In 1995 alone, Perez raked in more than \$4.6 million in purses, competing on the tough New York circuit. That year, at 18 years of age, Perez received the prestigious Eclipse Award for best apprentice jockey after falling three votes short of winning the same award a year earlier.

“We were tough to beat,” Perez said. “We had great horses; we won Breeders Cups and even as a kid, before I could ride, I had access to some of the most well bred horses in the world.”

Perez was associated with the stable belonging to Bill Mott, one of America’s best horse trainers, because Perez’s stepfather, Tim Jones, was Mott’s assistant trainer.

“It was satisfying for me to put somebody on a horse and go with them and have them do so well from the beginning,” Mott said. “He won a Grade 1 stake for us at Belmont (the 1995 Flower Bowl) when he still had the apprentice allowance, which was quite unusual, but that just shows the confidence I had in him, number one, and number two, the confidence that he had in himself to win a race like that.”

Perez won the first two races he ever rode in, at Churchill Downs on a filly named Alittle Grace and a gelding named Brief the Chief. He raced and won at Aqueduct, Belmont Park, and Saratoga Race Course while on the New York circuit.

A 1997 New York Racing Association calendar shows Perez grinning in a group shot of some of the other best jockeys in the sport, including Hall of Famer’s Pat Day, Mike Smith, Julie Krone, John Velasquez, Jerry Bailey and others.

Smith was Perez’s idol. The “Jockeys” star, who won the Kentucky Derby in 2005 on Giacomo and recently placed third on Jackson Bend in the Preakness Stakes, said Perez was like a son to him in the jockey room.

“He had a very short, but a great career,” Smith said. “He was just a great kid, and respected. But we had a lot of fun. He was so naïve; he’d believe anything you told him. It was always ‘yes sir’ and ‘no sir.’”

At Mott’s stable, Perez gained access and valuable connections. He worked his way up, from hotwalker to groom to exercise rider. Perez learned everything there was to know and was always hungry to learn more.



Ramon Perez, left, and his friend, Chad Anderson, who later became his agent, make their way to the unsaddling area after a race.

Photo courtesy of Ramon Perez

As a groom, he mucked out stalls and cleaned water buckets. All his experience doing various jobs in the barn contributed to Perez’s almost uncanny sense of being able to understand the subtleties of each animal.

Perez’s stellar rise to the top ranks of Thoroughbred racing came at a price, however. He struggled to keep his weight down but there was only so much he could do to stop his natural growth progression.

After three years of intense riding, Perez retired and did something he’d always wanted to do more of and never had time to – he traveled. He backpacked in Europe, and worked in Dubai and England, where he rode

briefly at a stable owned by Sheik Mohammed.

“My problem was, I started at the top and there is very little availability to ride when you start that high,” Perez said. “My career wasn’t going as well as it used to be.”

He returned to the U.S. and eventually started riding again, this time at smaller tracks where he said he felt he could be a “big fish in a small pond.” But the life of a jockey took its toll.

Perez’s “aha moment” was March 26, 2001 at a small Arizona track where he was scheduled to ride the first and last races of the day, with six and a half hours in between. He won the first race and Perez, all 110 pounds of him, was miserable.

“I had to sit in the jock’s room and I couldn’t eat or drink because I had to make weight for the last race. I just wanted a sip of Gatorade. So I sat in my cubby, and I said, ‘I can’t do it. I’m done.’ After I won that race at 12: 30 p.m., I took off.”

Soon after Perez left the track, he went on to complete his bachelor’s degree in history – the discipline his grandfather had been a professor in – at UF and subsequently took prerequisite courses to apply to veterinary school.

Perez hopes his internship at Randwick Equine Center will help him decide whether to pursue a residency in surgery and perhaps continue on with a career that would take him back to the horse business as a racetrack veterinarian. Perez admits that not a day goes by, particularly during racing season, that he doesn’t miss the thrill of riding.

He tries to remember his love for horses, focus on the fact that he won with his final mount, and remind himself he still has time to figure out the rest of his life.

“When you boil it down, I rode for a year at small tracks for very little money and I loved basically everything from the gate to the wire,” Perez said. “All the other stuff, the political stuff, you have to jump through hoops. But once I got to the gate, it was me and the horse and my instincts. It’s a fun game at that point and that was what I loved about it.”

## Large animal medicine specialist named chief of staff of UF veterinary Hospitals



Dr. Dana Zimmer

**Dana Zimmer, D.V.M.**, a clinical associate professor at UF's College of Veterinary Medicine, has been named interim chief of staff of UF's Veterinary Hospitals.

Zimmer has served as associate

chief of staff for the UF Large Animal Hospital since Jan. 26, 2010, but due to recent administrative restructuring, both the large and the small animal hospitals will now be supervised by a single chief of staff.

The UF Veterinary Hospitals function as a major referral center treating more than 18,700 animals annually. A new \$58 million small animal hospital is currently under construction and will be unique among veterinary colleges nationwide when it opens this fall. The new hospital will include a linear accelerator, a cardiology catheterization laboratory and state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment, including MRI and CT. Patients seen in both hospitals are referred by veterinarians throughout the state. Routine wellness and outpatient medicine clinics are also available.

In her new role, Zimmer will be responsible for all issues relating to patient care as well as managing hospital operations.

A 1995 UF veterinary school graduate, Zimmer is certified in equine practice by the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners and in large animal medicine by the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine. She performed an internship in equine field services at North Carolina State University and subsequently completed her residency there in large animal internal medicine and equine practice.

After working in private practice, then teaching for two years on the large animal medicine faculty at the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine, Zimmer joined UF's faculty in 2002 as an assistant professor of equine health extension. She was the college's equine extension agent and chief

of extension services until 2006. She became a clinical assistant professor of large animal medicine at the college in 2006, and has served as large animal medicine service chief since 2007.

Zimmer has received two UF Superior Accomplishment Awards for her service, in 2010 and in 2006, as well as numerous other awards for her contributions to equine health. She has served on the boards of the American Association of Equine Practitioners and the Florida Association of Equine Practitioners, and has performed committee work for AAEP, the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine and the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners.

## Clinical pathologist named UFRF professor



Dr. Rick Alleman

**Rick Alleman, D.V.M., Ph.D.**, a professor of clinical pathology at the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine, has received a UF Research Foundation professorship.

Sponsored by the university's Division of Sponsored Research, the professorships are awarded to tenured faculty campuswide for distinguished research and scholarship. The honor includes a \$5,000 salary increase each year for three years and a one-time \$3,000 award for research support.

A board-certified clinical pathologist, Alleman graduated from Louisiana State University's College of Veterinary Medicine in 1980. He worked in private practice as a veterinarian for several years prior to returning to the academic environment to complete a residency in clinical pathology at the UF veterinary college in 1992. Subsequently, Alleman received his Ph.D., also from UF, in 1995 in molecular biology of infectious disease.

Alleman began his UF faculty career as an instructor in 1994 in the college's department of physiological sciences. Since then, he has progressed through the faculty ranks to become a full professor. His primary research focus has been on developing molecular methods of diagnosis and the persistence of infection from tick-borne pathogens, specifi-

cally *Anaplasma* and *Ehrlichia*. This work has resulted in the recognition of different antigens used in the serological diagnosis of infections with these pathogens, which commonly affect livestock in parts of the world, but which are also known to affect people and other animals, such as dogs.

## Disney donation honors UF parasitologist, expands partnership

In honor of University of Florida professor **Ellis Greiner's** longtime contributions to Disney's Animal Kingdom, the company has made a \$20,000 gift to the UF College of Veterinary Medicine that will fund advanced continuing education programs for the attraction's veterinary staff.



Photo by Sarah Carey

Dr. Ellis Greiner is shown seated at his microscope with Dr. Scott Terrell. Dr. Greiner retired from the college in May after 32 years of service.

The Disney/UF Continuing Education Fund expands a 10-year partnership that Greiner helped establish between Disney's Animal Kingdom and the College of Veterinary Medicine. The fund will compensate UF veterinary faculty, residents, interns and staff who are willing to provide educational opportunities at Disney.

"One of the biggest comments from our veterinary staff has been that while we have all these wonderful opportunities with UF, we really need more continuing education for our technicians and veterinarians," said Scott Terrell, D.V.M., ('97), a veterinary pathologist and operations manager for Disney's department of animal health.

## In Memoriam



Dr. Kevin Anderson

### Dr. Kevin Anderson

**Kevin J. Anderson, Ph.D.**, 54, an associate professor of anatomy and neurobiology at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, died June 15, 2010 after a long and courageous fight with brain cancer.

Anderson had been a member of the UF CVM faculty since 1988, and taught gross anatomy to every veterinary student class since then. UF veterinary students chose him several times to receive their top teaching awards, given by individual classes and also by the Student Chapter of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

This past spring, he was named the college's College Council 2010 Teacher of the Year, the highest teaching honor bestowed by the council based on criteria including knowledge of subject matter, clarity of presentation, concern for students' mastery of subject, fairness, enthusiasm for teaching and overall interest in student welfare. Anderson also received the award in 1990.

In 1994, the college awarded Anderson its prestigious C.E. Cornelius Young Investigator Award for his research. His most recent research focused on the biomarkers of traumatic brain injury, and he had received funding support from the Veteran's Administration and other sources.

Anderson received his undergraduate degree in biology and subsequently a master's degree in zoology, both from Washington State University. His devotion to and interest in anatomy took him to the University of Kentucky, where he completed a Ph.D. in anatomy in 1984. Subsequently, Anderson conducted four years of postdoctoral research at the University of California, Irvine.

Anderson served for many years as the faculty advisor and ride team leader for Team Vet Med, a group of cyclists that ride regularly throughout the year and also raise money for student scholarships. In recognition of Anderson's contributions to the group, the Class of 2009 donated money to start a scholarship, the Dr. Kevin Anderson Team Vet Med Scholarship, in his name.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Kevin Anderson Team Vet Med Scholarship at the UF veterinary college; to UF; to Haven Hospice; or to a memorial of your choice. 🌿

## Dr. Lisa Conti honored by USF

**Lisa Conti, D.V.M.**, ('88), recently was named the Florida Outstanding Woman in Public Health for 2010 by the University of South Florida College of Public Health.

USF bestows the award each year to a woman whose career accomplishments and leadership have contributed significantly to the field of public health in Florida.

As director of the Florida Division of Environmental Health, Conti oversees the statewide activities and programs of the office to maintain and improve the state's environment, ensure quality services to decrease or eliminate the occurrence of preventable diseases, and to maintain surveillance, investigation and education of diseases of environmental origin.

She leads five bureaus: Environmental Public Health Medicine, Onsite Sewage Programs, Community Environmental Health, Water Programs, and Radiation Control, as well as the Office of Environmental Health Informatics and Preparedness.

Among her many accomplishments, Conti improved Florida's emergency response capabilities by creating Strike Teams and To Go kits. She helped found the Florida Rabies and Control and Prevention Advisory Committee and was the first leader in a state agency to purchase hybrid vehicles for her agency.

Conti received her master's degree in public health from USF in 1993, and is board certified by the American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine. 🌿

"We wondered how we could inspire faculty from UF to come down and provide continuing education for us, and thought one way would be to come up with some funding to compensate people for their time and travel," added Terrell, who is also a clinical assistant professor in the college's department of infectious diseases and pathology. "A tremendous amount of work goes into preparing lectures, particularly when they need to be higher level and created specifically for us."

In addition, Terrell and his colleagues wanted to recognize Greiner, who retired in May from the college after 32 years of service and whose support has been germane to the UF-Disney partnership.

## Veterinary administrator honored for disaster relief work

**John Haven**, the UF CVM's director of medical/health administration, recently was honored by Florida Governor Charlie Crist for his work with disaster relief and response efforts on behalf of the college and the state.

Dr. John Haven, right, accepts the 2010 Distinguished Service Award from Governor Charlie Crist during the Florida Governor's Hurricane Conference in Fort Lauderdale.

Haven received the Distinguished Service Award during the 24th annual Governor's Hurricane Conference, held May 23-28 in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. The award was given "for significant contributions to the state disaster preparedness and response efforts involving the rescue and care of large and small animals."

Photo Imaging by Rusty



Calendar ■

# 2010

**Oct 16**

The UF CVM will hold its annual Homecoming reunion celebration at the college. Time TBD. Contact Jo Ann Winn at [winnj@ufl.edu](mailto:winnj@ufl.edu) for more information.

**Oct 24**

Come see what all the fuss is about! The public is invited to join us for an open house preview of our new Small Animal Hospital from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Contact Sarah Carey, [careysk@ufl.edu](mailto:careysk@ufl.edu), for more information.

The annual Horse Farm 100 bike ride will take place in the morning. For more information about how to support TeamVetMed, contact Jo Ann Winn at [winnj@ufl.edu](mailto:winnj@ufl.edu).

**Nov 1**

The new UF Small Animal Hospital will be open for business. Call (352) 392-2225 for more information or to make an appointment.

**Nov 15**

Nominations for the 2011 Distinguished Award Program, sponsored by the CVM Alumni Council, are due. Contact Jo Ann Winn for more information.



The college was proud to honor its 2010 Distinguished Award winners during commencement exercises for the Class of 2010, held May 29 at the UF Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. From left to right are Dr. Kristin Kirkby, Young Alumni Award; Dr. Russ Snyder, Distinguished Service Award; Dr. Dena Baker, Alumni Achievement Award; and Dr. Bern Levine, Special Service Award.

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