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NEWS & EVENTS

CVM Alumna Takes Raptor Project Under Her Wing

A cockatiel named Chuckles sparked Stacey Beddoe's interest in birds. She received Chuckles as a pet while in high school, but her interest in avian medicine didn't hatch immediately. After attending Drury University in Springfield, she began her professional veterinary studies at the University of Missouri. Three fellow first-year students whom she befriended became involved in the University's Raptor Rehabilitation Project, but despite a personal interest in birds, the future Dr. Beddoe was not immediately drawn to the organization. She was aware that the organization's members made educational presentations, and being somewhat introverted, she lacked confidence in her public speaking skills.

"They kept telling me how cool (the project) was and finally talked me into attending a meeting. I was immediately hooked," Beddoe recalled.

The Raptor Rehabilitation Project is a service and education partnership of the MU College of Veterinary Medicine and the surrounding community. Veterinary students, other University of Missouri students and community members volunteer their time to rehabilitate injured raptors and care for resident birds. Volunteers also raise awareness about birds and their needs by giving presentations at schools and other forums throughout central Missouri. While many of the project members are from the community and not involved in the medical care of the birds, their efforts are crucial to the success of the program.

Beddoe's involvement with the raptor group began with taking care of birds housed in the raptor projects' mews, where wild birds recuperate from illness and injury, and the project's permanent residents — birds that can't be returned to the wild — also live. After receiving



Stacey Beddoe, DVM, adopted her umbrella cockatoo, Louie, from a clinic in St. Louis where she undertook a preceptorship as a veterinary student. Beddoe, who now practices veterinary medicine in Jefferson City, is serving as the medical advisor for the MU Raptor Rehabilitation Project.

training in handling the different types of raptors, whose beaks and talons are capable of inflicting serious injury, Beddoe advanced to showing the resident birds during the public presentations. She usually worked with a great horned owl named Squiggy, who had fallen from its nest as a baby. Squiggy never became proficient at hunting and could not fly well, so she became one of the project's permanent residents. With additional experience and veterinary training, Beddoe became qualified to provide medical care to injured and ill raptors brought to the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital.

Beddoe received her DVM in 2004 and moved to Jefferson City to work in a veterinary practice there. In 2007, she purchased Southwest Veterinary Clinic. She and two other veterinarians provide care for a variety of companion animals: dogs, cats, pocket pets, reptiles (excluding snakes), and potbelly pigs and goats, and, of course, birds. Although a former mentor discouraged her from pursuing avian medicine based on his own experiences, she said she has found there is a need in central Missouri for veterinarians willing to treat birds, and she attends to cases from as far away as Rolla and the Lake of the Ozarks region.

She recently took on additional duties, serving as the volunteer medical advisor for the Raptor Rehabilitation Project. Beddoe came on board with the project in November. She serves as the front-line advisor for medical treatment of raptors, consulting with veterinary students via phone and email on diagnostics and treatment plans for new patients and resident birds that may need medical intervention. She also travels to Columbia on alternating Tuesday evenings to meet with organization members.

Along with two MU CVM faculty advisors who serve as program mentors, Beddoe has been busy identifying ways to enhance educational opportunities for students and community members and establish policies for quality control and facilities maintenance. Beddoe is also exploring ways to streamline the training model to allow students the opportunity to handle the birds more quickly in the hope of increasing the number of veterinary students involved in the project.

Once veterinary students learn how to properly feed, harness and handle the different breeds of resident raptors and help maintain the birds' mews, they can advance to taking birds out on presentations. The next step in their training is in receiving injured or sick raptors at the veterinary hospital, triaging the birds, and administering medical care under the guidance of Beddoe.

"I want to help students develop their knowledge and technical skills, such as delivering fluid therapy administering antibiotics, either orally or through injection, and positioning birds for radiographs."

She said involvement in the Raptor Project expands upon the clinical experience students acquire while working toward their DVM. Equally important though, is helping students develop good overall diagnostic processes that they can carry into their own professional practices. "This program helps the students learn how to deductively work through a case even if they are in a situation where they don't have access to high-tech diagnostic tools and equipment."

Other initiatives aimed at enhancing the educational function of the project has been reinstituting rounds for an hour before each semi-monthly meeting to allow organization members to discuss medical topics affecting raptors that are in rehabilitation, and incorporating more instruction into the general meetings to enrich the experiences of community members who are not directly involved in the medical care of the rehabilitating raptors.

"The first topic was West Nile because we had a bird brought in with West Nile. Because West Nile is a virus, there is no cure, but there are supportive care treatment options, so we went over those," Beddoe said.

For more information about the Raptor Rehabilitation Project, or to learn how to become involved or support the project, visit <http://www.raptorrehab.missouri.edu/>.

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