

# Community Engagement Newsletter



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**Faculty of Veterinary Science**  
Special Edition: October 2014



## Help us help pets

Jenna-Lee Dunbar (DVN I)

This year, the students in the first-year veterinary nursing class kicked-off their practical career experience in a very meaningful way.

As the first-year veterinary nursing class of 2014, we aspired to raise funds for the Johannesburg branch of Pet Empowerment in Townships (PETS), a non-profit organisation that provides sterilisation services and basic medical care for the pets of people living in townships. We launched a mini campaign, "Help us help pets", in order to achieve our goals. We wanted to support a charity that could use our help and where we could use our skills to make a difference, not only in the lives of animals, but also in the lives of pet owners. PETS is a place where we could do exactly this.

PETS coordinates regular spay-a-thon events in townships like Orange Farm. It relies solely on donations for medical supplies, equipment and volunteers. The organisation sterilises some 60 dogs and cats at these events. All these animals also receive free food and a dog collar with a leash. Besides sterilisation, the organisation offers basic medical care, vaccination, deworming and defleaing to over 300 animals during a spay-a-thon event.

In order to raise the money needed, the young nurses organised a number of fun activities in which everybody in the class could participate. They held bake sales during tea times at the Arnold Theiller Building on the Onderstepoort Campus and a raffle that was kindly sponsored by Eukanuba. The more adventurous nurses held a "free hugs" event at Wonderpark Shopping Centre.

Needless to say, the event brought great amusement to shoppers and students alike. It also spread the word and educated people about PETS in an interactive way.

All three these events were a great success, but the students did not stop there. "We believe that teaching children about proper pet care is the foundation for responsible future pet ownership," they explained. This conviction prompted them to get involved with Rachel de Beer Primary School's Pets Week. As part of the learners' education about pets and pet care, the teachers very kindly agreed to teach the learners about animal charities and shelters. They also held a fundraising event for PETS on the students' behalf.

Ten nursing students from the class assisted at one of the spay-a-thon events that took place in June. They gained valuable practical experience with regard to handling dogs and cats and honed their nursing skills by assisting with



vaccinations, deworming, defleaing and performing basic clinical examinations on more than 300 dogs and cats. The students were responsible for post-operative observations and minor wound care at the medical station. It was a very valuable community engagement event where they gained first-hand experience of what it takes to manage an event like this. The most valuable experience was to see towards whom and what the charity drive was aimed.

The event showed the students that you can make a difference just by volunteering your time and effort.

The fundraising campaign was a huge success. They managed to exceed their initial goal of R1 500 and raised more than R4 000! This is enough money to sponsor 12 sterilisations for PETS.



## An adventure and a privilege

Matthew Huckle (member 2014 Vet Books for Africa: Email: matt2huckle@gmail.com  
Cell: 073 987 6835)

I am very excited to be part of an initiative that has been in operation for 20 years. Although I am nervous about the daunting task of having to uphold the high standards set by my predecessors, the challenge is sure to be an enriching experience.

I will leave my comfort zone and be sent into the great African continent, where I will sleep in a tent (or more likely a bakkie), drive on dirt roads, avoid malaria and enter very unfamiliar territory for six weeks.

Although this sounds like a difficult task, the reward that achieving our goal of uplifting education in Africa will have, makes me want to do it over and over again.

Vet Books for Africa is a bi-annual initiative that I am very proud to be part of. After a selection process, a group of eight Veterinary Science students will embark on an adventure that will definitely leave its mark on veterinary education in Africa.

Over the next two years, we will be knocking on donor doors, organising events, planning routes and doing many menial activities to raise the funds needed to achieve our goal. We aim to promote education and conservation while uniting veterinary students across Africa. We participate in this project because we believe that it is essential for those with resources to share these with those who lack them, thereby improving the knowledge of others.

Our journey into Africa will span six weeks and entails donating the necessary up-to-date books to universities in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. We will not only be donating books, but will also provide the necessary paraphernalia, non-prescription drugs and other items such as old laptops and computers to various African charities. In addition, we are starting to help local charities in Gauteng. The project relies solely on donations – making the two years of preparation rather daunting.

### What is the role of Vet Books for Africa in the future?

Vet Books for Africa believes that, by enhancing communication among universities in our neighbouring countries, we can improve the research done by these universities. Through communication with universities in so many countries we can strengthen the links that these universities have with each other. This, in turn, can be put into effect in terms of research. We will also be building relationships with potential future colleagues on a continent where opportunities show themselves every day. By improving the education of veterinary science students and uplifting animal health care in Africa, the image of veterinarians will be enhanced on a large scale.

The previous Vet Books for Africa committees were fortunate enough to have two Isuzu bakkies on their journey. We are hoping to obtain a similar sponsor that will aid us on our journey of some 10 000 km.

The previous committees helped a farmer perform 400 rectal palpations on his Boran herd, adopted an elephant orphan named Sites in Nairobi and went tiger fishing on the banks of the Zambezi River. I am very excited to share ideas with people who share my interests and to talk about veterinary care with people of diverse cultures. I feel extremely privileged to be a part of such an amazing adventure. Our journey starts now.

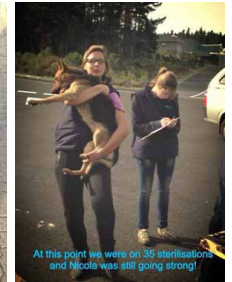
## MEETING

Community Engagement Committee  
meeting will be held on Monday  
20 October 2014 at 13:30.

# VetSol: Saving lives one sterilisation at a time!

Alwyn Venter, Anke Venter, Jandre Pretorius, Nicola Schloms and Zandri Visagie (BVSc III)

Veterinary Solutions (VetSol) is a non-profit organisation that has been rendering an essential mobile veterinary sterilisation and primary treatment programme in underprivileged communities in the Western Cape since 2005.



To date, they have sterilised more than 32 000 animals in areas like Khayelitsha, Grabouw and Sutherland. Sr Dagmar Atkinson, the founder of VetSol, is still running the project nine years later, while working as the veterinary nurse.

We want to thank the wonderful people at VetSol for the amazing opportunity to work alongside them. We had so much fun and your enthusiasm makes us very excited for our future in this career.

We spent two mornings in Khayelitsha and one day in Grabouw. Our experience in Khayelitsha was eye opening. It was great to see the amount of care and love people have for their animals, even when they have little. The set up in the small containers in Khayelitsha is very effective. The friendly staff always make you

laugh and they run the show like a well-oiled machine. Watching Dr Anderson sterilise the animals was great. His technique is precise and effortless. Our day at Grabouw was even more fun because we were very busy. We learnt a lot and gained more confidence with handling dogs. We have so much respect for Sr Atkinson. It is wonderful to watch her work and it is always a pleasure to be around her. She was always smiling or laughing and, in stressful moments, she had a calming effect.

Meeting Jade Buckfield was also a privilege. Thank you for all your hard work and all the spoils you organised for us. We are so grateful for such an amazing group to work with. VetSol is an inspiring cause and we cannot wait for the day that we can fully participate in the cause. Many people dream of changing the world, but we have come to realise that VetSol really does it.

**DONATIONS:** All donations received will be used for community engagement purposes, particularly in poor-resourced communities. Please contact one of the following people if you would like to donate money, dog food, collars, leashes, blankets or your time:

|                     |              |   |                           |
|---------------------|--------------|---|---------------------------|
| Dr Rebone Moerane   | 012 529 8464 | Chairperson: Community Engagement Committee | rebone.moerane@up.ac.za   |
| Sr Sarah Johnson    | 012 529 8387 | Liaison and Communication                   | sarah.johnson@up.ac.za    |
| Mr Eugene Machimana | 012 529 8100 | Community Engagement Coordinator            | eugene.machimana@up.ac.za |

## The 'dog bite special'

Johannes Visser (Director/ Project Manager)

Alumni from the University's Department of Drama collaborated with the Faculty of Veterinary Science on a community engagement project that required them to act for a cause.

After discussing various possibilities for a community engagement project with Mr Eugene Machimana (Community Engagement Coordinator) and Dr Quixi Sonntag (lecturer in the Department of Companion Animal Clinical Studies), we agreed to tackle the concerning issue of dog bite incidents in rural and township environments with this Theatre for Development intervention. It turned out to be an enlightening, yet fun and exciting experience for everyone involved.

A cast of four young, energetic and very creative professional actors (all UP Drama alumni) participated in the project. Ms Tshephang Maapola, Mr Themba Mahlangu, Mr Sandile Shabangu and Mr Mdu Nhlapo were excellent performers and coped in difficult circumstances at times. They were able to instantly adapt from venue to venue, ranging from outside spaces, including playgrounds, sportsfields and squares, to enclosed spaces like school halls and even classrooms. As they are multilingual, the actors could also communicate with their audiences in their preferred language at every performance.

Another "plume in the hat" of the actors is that – although the original programme was compiled for younger audiences – they were able to captivate even Grade 12 learners with their show.



The performance took place based on the style of a reality television programme, with the learners put in the role as the studio audience. This contributed to the interactive communication between the actors on stage and their audience. At certain stages of the performance, volunteers were even invited to participate in the action on stage. The characters included a whole range of humans and dogs, from the flamboyant presenter Ms Dodo Shabango to the laid-back Mr Chappies as well as Mr Chisanyama, Mr Blessings, Mr Tshepo, Mr Kabelo and, of course, the dogs, Snoopdog, Sporty and Bulldozer (also known as Voertsek).

The actors decided to establish the Animals Rights Fighters Society and invited all audience members to join this institution at the end of the show. Most of the learners enthusiastically wanted to do so.

With the information and insight provided by Mr Machimana and Dr Sonntag, we were able to juxtapose interaction between humans and animals (specifically dogs in this case) to distribute information and create awareness of both the positive and the negative aspects of this inevitable co-habitation. The contact details of Mamelodi Animal Health Clinic (MAHC), Community



Veterinary Clinics (CVC) and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) were displayed on placards during the performance and made available to the audience at the end of each show.

Media World recorded the performance, and inserts and interviews were broadcast on Growing Tomorrow (SABC 2) on 13 August 2014. The audiences received the performances with great enthusiasm, with overwhelmingly positive feedback from both learners and school staff members.

I would like to conclude with a quote from Mr Machimana's report on the project when he quoted Sr Nicolien Fourie (senior veterinary sister):

"I was amazed to see how an excellent message was conveyed to learners without the use of props or decor. The message was clear, age-relevant and really funny (and humour always helps to connect people and make them remember things). The four actors were brilliant and deserved all the applause and praise they received!

I really wish that this production could be presented on a much larger scale to far more schools!"

## A day worth remembering: PHOMOLONG SECONDARY SCHOOL AT LORY PARK ZOO

Lucinda Cowan and Hanli Marx (BVSC III)

Teaching children about conservation is a very important task. For this reason, the goal of our community engagement project was to educate young people in the Tembisa community about the importance of nature conservation and the role of veterinarians in conservation. We worked with Lory Park Zoo to educate and entertain learners at the Phomolong Secondary School.

Lory Park Animal and Owl Sanctuary is a proud establishment in the Midrand Community. The park opened its gates in 2000 under the leadership of its founder and curator, Eddy van Eck. It boasts a great variety of animals of several species, and plays



a large role in the conservation of animals and education in the local community. The park has become well acquainted with many of the animal welfare organisations in the area and is a trusted institute when it comes to taking in abandoned, abused and confiscated animals. It is the park's mission to protect these animals and to aid in the conservation of local and foreign animal species.

Phomolong Secondary School is situated in the township of Tembisa, Phomolong. The school opened its doors in 2006 as a school for underprivileged children. Since 2006, it has grown exponentially and achieved a 97,5% matric pass rate in 2013.

Our group visited the school on 14 May 2014 to talk to the Grade 10 Life Science classes about conservation and veterinary science. Representatives from Lory Park brought along a tortoise, a bearded dragon and a boa constrictor for the learners to interact with. Even though nearly everyone screamed when George (the red-tail boa constrictor) appeared, we were pleased to see that they all wanted to touch him afterwards to overcome their fear.

After the talk, we selected 15 students to accompany us on a field trip to the Park. The field trip took place on 16 May 2014. At Lory Park, our ranger, Kelly Duligal, described the background of all the animals the Park houses to the learners and gave them time to interact with various animals. The learners were given the opportunity to help with the environmental enrichment of the birds and primates in the Park by building enrichment toys.

Matty van Eck, part-owner of the park, gave the learners the opportunity to come back to the park free of charge to participate in Ranger Day. This is a holiday programme where children can go to the park for a day and work as a zoo keeper. We arranged for the learners to attend this event on 2 July 2014 and accompanied them for the day.

We want to thank everyone at Lory Park for their support and contribution to our project, as well as Mr Makafula from the Phomolong Secondary School for making sure the learners were



informed with regard to all the arrangements for our project. We would also like to thank the sponsors who made it possible for us to take part in this amazing project: Rubix Shuttles and Transfers, Montana KwikSpar, Wonderboom Meatworld and the Wonderboom Bird Park.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

| Event                              | Venue                             | Date                       |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Production Animal Outreach Clinic  | Makapanstad and Ratjiepan Project | Wednesdays                 |
| Mamelodi Animal Health Care (MAHC) | Mamelodi Campus                   | Mondays to Fridays         |
| Loate Community Veterinary Clinic  | Winterveldt                       | Once a month on Wednesdays |



### DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO PUBLISH?

The Community Engagement Committee invites you to submit short articles to be published in the next newsletter. The community engagement article should not be more than one page in length. Contact person: Eugene Machimana Tel: 012 529 8100 (w)  
Email: [eugene.machimana@up.ac.za](mailto:eugene.machimana@up.ac.za)

Visit the UP Community Engagement website regularly for updates about projects and funding opportunities.