President’s Message
Dr. Timothy Lee

The goal of this organization is to highlight the importance of the relationship we have with our animals and their response to humans. That BOND we talk about is mutually beneficial and is part of the reason for the existence of the veterinary profession. Yes, the veterinary profession would exist in the large animal realm because of economic reasons, but much of the equine and certainly the small animal segments depend on and further the Human-Animal Bond.

This organization was formed as an association by and for veterinarians and the students in veterinary colleges. We are heading in a more inclusive direction as we meet for the annual, in person, board meeting in July. We expect to change the membership of the organization to include technicians and staff of veterinary practices. They are the front line of client contact and are as important as veterinarians in carrying the message of the bond.

The board of directors will have positions allocated for technicians and possibly associated professions such as sociologists. Most of the leadership positions and board seats will remain veterinary with this redirection.

It has been proposed that part of the redirection of the organization could include a name change. That change would recognize the inclusion of members of the practice team. Changes of that sort will require board action at the annual meeting. We will meet in July at the AVMA annual meeting. Other items are on the agenda and the report of that meeting will be available on our Facebook page and will be sent to members of the association.

Another change that will be occurring is the increased exposure of the organization in its educational offerings. We have sponsored a day long tract at the North American Veterinary Conference in Orlando, Florida and at the AVMA annual meeting wherever that occurs. Starting in 2018, we will add the Western Veterinary Conference. Most of the same speakers are expected to present at all three important meetings and that will assure that most attendees at the national meetings can have exposure to our outstanding speakers. We are very pleased to be able to expand the sponsorship to the WVC.

Thanks to our members and friends for providing the support needed to further the Human-Animal Bond message. We need your input and attendance at our educational offerings.
I Had To Euthanize A Dog
by Neal Villanueva, DVM

I had to euthanize a dog. I’ve done this hundreds of times, sometimes multiple times in one day. Should have been routine, but this time it was different. This dog first came to me as an 8-week old puppy, full of energy and stinky puppy breath. His owner was a young woman who was on crutches. She had been in a bad car accident several months prior. She was becoming very depressed as a result, so her family bought her a puppy. It gave her a reason to get up in the morning, something to tend to and care for while she was healing. He was the best therapy dog ever. I saw this dog through all of his life stages, through adulthood and into his geriatric years. He developed a nail bed infection that did not respond to antibiotic therapy. It ended up being malignant melanoma, and the owner decided not to pursue aggressive surgical treatment and chemotherapy. It was heartbreaking not only for the client, but for me as well.

For the most part, we are an altruistic profession. We are unselfish, selfless, and noble custodians of the human-animal bond. Separating ourselves from our patients, our clients, and our clinics is something we should do as normal human beings. “Leave work at work!” we often hear and self-proclaim. Yet we fail miserably, mulling over this patient, or that surgery, or disgruntled clients. We will sacrifice all too much of our time, skills, efforts, and empathy for our animal charges and the humans that are attached to them. This was just one patient out of thousands that affected me. Although I know that malignant melanoma is a real bad dude, I feel like I failed him and his owner. It hurt, like I was euthanizing one of my own.

Keeping that separation seems counter-intuitive, especially in relation to the human-animal bond. To be totally disconnected would make us seem distant and non-sympathetic to our clients. Yet, when we do become involved, it affects us mentally, emotionally, and physically. Finding that happy medium can be evasive. It’s a frustrating profession that tests our perseverance and patience.

There is no simple solution. It’s compounded by the different levels of attachment people have with their pets. You don’t treat the owners of a hunting dog the same way you treat owners of a pampered pooch. Their expectations are different, their attitudes are different, and their demeanors are different. It’s compounded by our very roots of veterinary medicine. It’s the old country farm doc that was available 24-7-365. People expect that from their veterinarians, and veterinarians feel bound to that stigma. It’s compounded by the advancements of veterinary medicine and the costs associated with those advancements. Yet the financial expectations of clients are stuck in the 1950s and 60s.

It’s compounded by our type-A personalities, the will to be right, and to be successful all the time. At the same time, some are socially awkward and have gravitated towards animals instead of people for their unconditional love. Some are “animal lovers” not “people persons.”

It’s compounded by the sensationalism of the media in cable TV shows (you continued on page 7

Dr. Villanueva graduated from the University of Hawaii in 1986 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science, and achieved his DVM from Michigan State University in 1991 (Go Green!). He has worked in large and small animal practices, emergency practice, and was an educator and program director of a veterinary technology program. He is currently the medical director at the VCA Swengel Animal Hospital in Indianapolis, Indiana and is an administrator of a veterinary medicine mental health social media group.
The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Conference

JULY 21-25 2017, INDIANAPOLIS, IN

AAH-ABV TRACK INFORMATION

Dr. Marty Becker, DVM, founder of Fear Free℠, practices at North Idaho Animal Hospital. He is an adjunct professor at his alma mater, Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine, and also at the Colleges of Veterinary Medicine at Colorado State University and the University of Missouri. He has lectured at every veterinary school in the United States, and is on the advisory board of World Vets, an international veterinary and disaster relief programs to help animals.

Patrick Flynn, DVM, a 1994 graduate of the Va-Md College of Veterinary Medicine, was in small animal private practice for 13 years before going to for Pfizer/Zoetis where he has been a field-based technical services medical lead for the northern portion of Florida for 10 years. He is pursuing a Master’s degree in Anthrozoology at Canisius College in Buffalo, NY, and is enjoying learning about all the things he never got to learn about in veterinary school.

Kimberly Pope-Robinson, DVM, CCFP, founded 1 Life Connected Consulting (1Lifecc) in 2015 with a vision to help Connect Careers with Life’s Passion. Upon graduating from UC Davis, she practiced in both the large and small animal sectors, transitioning from running a single veterinary practice to managing multiple hospitals for a large corporate practice, leading her into the pharmaceutical sector as a Regional Strategic Veterinarian where she works with specialists and their teams.

Cindy Korsky CSP, LCSW, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with training in Compassion Fatigue and Crisis Events, her clinical areas of expertise are Workplace Disasters, including suicides, loss of life on the job and after hours, hostage situations and responses to crisis events involving animals. Cindy is the Clinical Director for a County Critical Incident Response Team and is part of the Behavioral Health Response Team for Florida and Critical Incident Stress Debriefer.

The 2016 Bustad Award Lecture

The 2016 Bustad Award winning lecture is Jody Sandler, DVM. Dr. Sandler will present his lecture, “How Blindness, Autism, and Service Dogs May Help Characterize the Etiology of the Human-Animal Bond” at 4 pm on Friday, July 21, at the American Veterinary Medical Association Conference.

Much is still unknown about the etiology of the human-animal bond. While we can easily identify the incredible benefits and outcomes of this magical bond on both human and animal, we have no scientific explanation for what causes the bond to occur. By examining communication between children with autism and their service dogs, and people with blindness and their guide dogs, we can begin to characterize possibilities for what does, and what does not play a primary role in the formation of the bond.

In this lecture, we will discuss how people with special needs communicate with their service dog, and how the dog attempts to communicate with their partner. Communication is achieved through many modalities, and we will stretch the limits of what we know about them to conjecture about the realm in which the formation of the human-animal bond could occur.

The AVMA is hosting a joint reception for the AAH-ABV & Animal Welfare tracks to honor the Bustad Lecture winner in the foyer outside the AAH-ABV lecture hall immediately following Dr. Sandler’s lecture. All attendees and board members are invited to attend!
In 2014, the Human Animal Bond Club (HABC) at UC Davis grew from the Pet Loss Support Club after several students recognized that the human-animal bond was a topic lacking in our curriculum. Since then the HABC has provided students with educational lectures and activities to acknowledge its importance in our future careers. I personally jumped on the opportunity to be part of the HABC because, simply put, it is the reason why I want to be a veterinarian. As President this year, I have had the amazing opportunity to celebrate and raise awareness of the bond with my colleagues. From hospice care to veterinary relief work in underdeveloped countries, our club was able to explore the human, animal, and veterinary sides of the human-animal bond.

We began the year with a lunch lecture by Dr. Eric Davis. He presented an overview of the veterinary relief work that takes place in Nicaragua and shared the side of the human-animal bond he witnessed overseas. He felt it was important for students to recognize that the human-animal bond exists across nations and cultures, but what may differ are the resources that are available for people to medically care for their animals. Nonetheless, he saw children walk barefoot for miles to bring animals to his clinics when it was all that they could do for their pets. Dr. Davis witnessed an incredible sense of companionship between Nicaraguans and their animals, emphasizing the importance for veterinary relief work to aid the human-animal bond in underdeveloped areas.

In October, the HABC was honored to participate in the Our Oath in Action Animal Adoptathon. In addition to a display that provided information about pet ownership in the United States, we asked attendees to write down one thing they love about their pets on a post-it note. We received children’s drawings of their beloved pocket pets, and answers such as “They saved my life”, “Horses are great teachers”, and “A sense of wonder and giving life meaning”. The result was a poster board covered in tangible evidence of the human-animal bond and the
profound effect it had on the lucky individuals who experienced it.

Our club is fortunate that we can collaborate with many other campus organizations as the human-animal bond relates to all aspects of veterinary medicine. This year we teamed up with the Canine Medicine Club to bring awareness to “Guide Dogs for the Blind” and the human-animal bond that guide dogs and their handlers share. Students learned how they as veterinarians can support clients whose dogs are more than just companions. Additionally, we teamed up with the Feline Medicine Club and Integrative Vet Medicine Club to invite Dr. Lynn Hendrix, owner of “Beloved Pet Mobile Vet,” to share her experiences in hospice care. This was our most successful event of the year, and about one hundred students were able to witness Dr. Hendrix’ holistic approach to supporting clients while caring for their furry family members.

Concluding the year in the spring, the HABC welcomed Dr. Pope-Robinson of “1 Life Connected Consulting.” Dr. Pope emphasizes that the human-animal bond drives us as veterinary professionals, but it can be a burden when advocating for animals and their owners overlaps with our personal health and wellbeing. Attendees of her lecture included students, staff, and residents, who walked away with a refreshing perspective on how the human-animal bond can reconnect us to our careers and our life’s passions, rather than bringing us down.

Starting this August, the HABC is looking forward to an exciting new year, with more speakers and activities to come! We would like to thank the American Association of Human-Animal Bond Veterinarians for all of their support and guidance in everything we have accomplished so far at UC Davis SVM.
The human-animal bond is what led me to become a veterinary technician. I recognized this bond when cats who were aloof would come to purr on my lap if I was feeling down. I remember the family dog coming to gently nudge my hand and rest his head on my lap for attention when I was overwhelmed. There was an unspoken bond between an animal and their human. It was one of the purest forms of trust and love that any person could experience. As I began my journey in veterinary medicine, I learned this emotion had a label. I came to learn that these emotions summed up the human-animal bond. As a veterinary technician, I vowed to do everything in my power to promote this bond and allow it to grow.

My trek into veterinary medicine not only brought me experience, it also brought me a huge dose of reality. There are things that we do in this field that aren’t fun. We treat animals who are fearful, aggressive or just not responding to a treatment plan. We sometimes make recommendations to clients regarding treatment, diet, lifestyle and behavior that just aren’t feasible or pleasant. We ask clients to give oral, ophthalmic and otic medications that cause their pet to run from the sight of the bottle or retreat under the bed for days. Whether we want to admit it or not, sometimes our treatments and recommendations chip away and undermine the human-animal bond. Realizing this can create a whole new wave of emotions and frustrations in an already challenging field.

To illustrate how our jobs can cause detriment to this bond and create a variety of unhealthy and guilt based emotions, I want to tell you Titan’s story. Titan was a 3-year-old, neutered male blue heeler who had been pawing at his ears and head shaking. Simple enough presentation that we see and treat every day. However, this minor procedure was anything but simple as far as Titan was concerned. Being a blue heeler it would be an understatement to say that he was stubborn. He was a friendly, active dog but had no interest in doing anything he didn’t want to do. His owner decided that the best way to train this dog was through asserting his dominance over Titan. He’d commonly do the dominance roll at home to assert his position. So, in response to this, Titan became reactive and any attempt at restraint, even low stress methods, caused him to alligator roll and scream.

There was no way to perform an ear exam while Titan was throwing himself around on the floor. So, we recommended using sedation and anesthesia if needed to complete an exam, obtain an ear cytology, clean his ears and initiate treatment. The owner approved everything. Initially our plan was to give him an IV injection of dexdomitor. We knew less was more with Titan, so we attempted to gently occlude the vein. The second the needle pierce his skin, he exploded. Full on contorting, rolling and snapping. There’s no way it was happening. We stopped, gave Titan a break and decided that we would give the injection IM and let him calm down. After 20 minutes, a lot of vocalizing, and flailing we were able to get the injection into him.

Our treatment area was a disaster. There was fur, syringes, spilled Epiotic and cotton swabs strewn about. But
now that we had given this magical injection, we would be able to execute our treatment plan shortly, right? Nope.

Titan laughed at our drugs. It was a busy day in the clinic so I decided to take him into radiology, turn off the lights, cover him with a towel and get him to relax by slowly petting him. He nodded off multiple times over the next 30 minutes. But the second anyone came near his ears, he began to flail. So now we must figure out how we are to titrate Propofol IV to be able to get a mere cytology and ear cleaning done.

My overseeing vet and I sat in the dark with Titan. We pulled up a dose of Propofol and as Titan nodded off went to inject the Propofol.

Once the needle hit his skin, Titan launched up like a rocket. There was more flailing, despite our best restraint efforts. In all this my vet shouted, “Don’t you hurt her!” as I was sent crashing into the door of radiology by this panicked cattle dog. At this point, my veterinarian and I sat in the dark and experienced a variety of emotions. We were frustrated, perplexed and delved into madness by laughing hysterically at the anarchy unfolding during a very simple procedure gone so horribly awry. We both took a deep breath and resigned. This would not go as planned. We very carefully lodged in-between his head tossing to collect a sample for cytology. Then we bobbed and weaved to gently flush his ears as much as tolerated. It wasn’t perfect. It wasn’t rewarding. We drizzled an ointment into his ears and said some “Hail Mary’s” that the owner could do this at home.

Villanueva, Continued from page 2
all know who I’m talking about). Social media allows clients to bash, berate, criticize, and degrade us without fear of retribution. The negative, or even neutral, review seems like a stab in the heart when we pour our hearts and souls into our profession. It’s no wonder that the mental health of today’s veterinarians, technicians, assistants, and staff is in such shambles today.

We may never perfect the balance, find the happy medium, or figure out the right formula. But what we can do is control what we can control and let go of the things we can’t control. We can find time to refresh ourselves so we can remain fresh in our job, to re-create ourselves with recreation to find time to purge our ills, and regain our wills. We need to be human first, and veterinarians second.

For me, I found something that I can ultimately and unequivocally be perpetually bad at…I have discovered the game of golf. It gets me outside, gets me physically moving, and makes me realize that there is something I am infinitely worse at than veterinary medicine. It challenges me mentally, emotionally, and physically. It’s a frustrating game that tests your perseverance and patience. Sound familiar? Its veterinary medicine all over again, except it involves clubs, a ball (or several balls in my case), and a hole. The difference is golf is on my terms. Veterinary medicine should be more like golf, on my terms. And when I think I suck at veterinary medicine, I suck even worse at golf.
Join the AAH-ABV online at aahabv.org

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