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VMAS President's Letter

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vmas president's letter

As Penn Vet celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2009, the Veterinary Medical Alumni Society celebrates 122 years—a volunteer organization instituted the year the first Penn Vet class graduated. As I begin my first term as president of this “VMAS,” I think about how we alumni can give back to our profession and our school. The word that keeps coming to mind is *service*.

Our profession is facing many challenges today. The cost of a veterinary education has sky-rocketed and veterinary students are now more in debt than ever. There is a shortage of veterinarians in rural practice due to the declining number of graduates entering that field as well as those who leave these areas after several years. Our school also faces economic challenges. The commonwealth has proposed a 10-percent budget cut for the school this fiscal year, a \$20-million cut from July 2009 to June 2010. **Dr. Joan C. Hendricks, V'79, GR'80**, the Gilbert S. Kahn Dean of Veterinary Medicine, continues to update alumni, staff and friends regularly about the impact of the commonwealth's cut and the economic downturn on the school. She invites all alumni to email her at lean@vet.upenn.edu with thoughts, comments and ideas.

In these unprecedented times, how can we alumni serve the school and our profession? Let me first acknowledge that many alumni have and continue to serve already—by volunteering, fundraising and working as ambassadors of the school and as pioneers in the profession. In fact, at the Penn Annual Conference (PAC), six alumni in reunion classes were recognized for their commitment to the profession and to our school through the prestigious Alumni Award of Merit (**Daniel Flynn, V'58; Daniel Rice III, V'63; George Hartenstein IV, V'68; David Nunamaker, V'68; James Stewart, V'68; Susan Emeigh Hart, V'83**). These alumni have given back in many ways—from research that benefits animals and human to mentoring vet students to supporting the school.

VMAS also honored two individuals who greatly impacted people's lives with VMAS president awards. The first VMAS president's award was given to **Malcolm Keiter**, associate dean for admissions, for his 20-year commitment, dedication and service to the candidates, students and alumni of the school. The second was given posthumously to **St. George Hunt, V'86**. “Saint,” as many of us knew him, was a member of the alumni board, participated on the Admissions Committee, cared about students and was dedicated to the school's mission. He was also a classmate of mine and a dear friend. I personally will miss his invaluable input on the VMAS board and his friendship.

So I call on you to serve. *Get involved. Start early. Stay committed.*



Dr. Chieffo, V'86, GR'98, gives past-president Dr. Michael Moyer, V'90, a plaque in recognition of his service. Photo by John Donges.

I can remember as a new graduate, the alumni society was the farthest thing from my mind. Today, the school is working hard to invite students into the alumni family even before graduation. Each year, VMAS hosts a young alumni luncheon at the PAC. This year we invited young alumni, along with senior Penn Vet students. Here young alumni and soon-to-be alumni can talk with VMAS board members about what the alumni society is doing and how to get involved.

Come to Alumni Reunion Weekend. This year's reunion reception is May 15 at New Bolton Center's Allam House and May 16 in the city at the Hill Pavilion. Reunion weekend is a chance to revisit the school's campuses, but it also is much more; it is a chance to network with other alumni and faculty. By talking with others, you may find opportunities to serve the school or the profession. Be sure to visit the Penn Vet Web site (www.vet.upenn.edu) for more information.

Also this spring, Penn Vet and the Wharton School jointly launch the Executive Veterinary Leadership Program. Open to all veterinarians, it is designed to prepare us for making a greater contribution as public-health leaders. Again, visit the school's Web site for more details.

Finally, my goal as president for the next two years will be to find ways we can have a greater impact on our school and profession. Join me as we have the true opportunity to change the course of our profession and history.

—CARLA CHIEFFO, V'86 GR'98