



Thank Your Vet for a Healthy Pet® 2009 Winner Profile

1. What does winning the Thank Your Vet for a Healthy Pet® award mean to you?

It is a great honor and helps me to feel fulfilled in my job to know that my passion for veterinary medicine, in particular veterinary cardiology, is recognized and appreciated by my clients.

2. When did you decide to become a vet and why?

I wanted to be a veterinarian since I was about 10 years old. When I went to college, however, I decided to become premed and even took the MCATs and applied to medical schools. It was not until after I was offered interviews that I realized medical school was not for me. While I wanted to practice cutting-edge medicine and be involved with student learning, I really wanted to do this with animals, not people. So I instead went to veterinary school with the goal in mind to pursue specialization and eventually work in academia, which is what I do now!

3. Who were the special animals in your life (past and current)?

I had some very special dogs when I was in college who traveled with me through my internship and residency and then back to the veterinary college where I now work. I have since lost them both and feel as if a chapter of my life has ended as they were my first “kids.”

Now I have human children—three of them. My two older children are disabled, and we now have a very, very special service dog for them, a golden retriever named Jazmin. So she is a different type of special from my initial two animal children, but also very wonderful.

4. What are the most memorable experiences you have had in your career?

I think my most memorable experience was being hired to come back to the University of Florida where I went to school. Coming back for the first time following graduation and interviewing with my former professors and now potential colleagues was a very unique experience—intimidating and challenging but also incredibly rewarding.

5. What is your care philosophy toward your animal patients and their owners?

Having a pet in your life, no matter what point of life you are in (a young child, young adult, middle aged or retired), is a huge part of your life. Pets are part of the family and in most cases one of the children. So I always treat my patients and clients knowing that I am treating a very important member of the family—just the same as if I were a pediatrician taking care of a child.

6. Do you encourage your clients to do their own pet health research?

Absolutely! In this day and age there is so much information that they can learn both before and after a diagnosis is made.

7. How do you use research in your practice?

Every day! I am the principal investigator for many clinical trials for cardiovascular disease in companion animals.

8. What is the most rewarding aspect of your professional life?

Being able to utilize my profession in so many different ways—from being a doctor to being a teacher, a mentor and a researcher. I love all of the hats I get to wear!

9. How has the profession changed since you became a doctor?

There are so many more options available to veterinarians and owners now. Veterinarians have so many opportunities for what they can do with their careers—and because of this, pet owners have many specialists and cutting-edge medicine available to them.