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## **Thank Your Vet essays tell of amazing work**

When Morris Animal Foundation launched the nationwide Thank Your Vet for a Healthy Pet contest, we had no idea the response we would receive. To our surprise and delight, more than 1,000 essay nominations were sent in from pet owners throughout the country. From reading the essays, it was apparent why veterinarians are one of the most trusted professions. Their commitment to and passion for animals is amazing.

The 2007 winners were honored in front of their peers at the Western Veterinary Conference in Las Vegas on Feb. 19, 2008.

Below, read portions of the winning essays. We think you'll agree that these are deserving veterinarians. We also hope you will nominate your veterinarian for the 2008 contest. Rules and online forms will be posted this spring on [www.MorrisAnimalFoundation.org](http://www.MorrisAnimalFoundation.org) and on [www.thankyourvet.org](http://www.thankyourvet.org).

### **National and Midwest Regional Winner**

James L. Cook

Director of the Comparative Orthopaedic Laboratory, University of Missouri

Nominated by: Michael Ray, Deltona, Fla., and Sherri Rusch of Warrensburg, Mo.

Michael wrote:

*"Vet after vet gave me the same answer: 'I don't know what the problem is.' Finally, we heard a different response during a visit to the University of Florida Veterinary Hospital. Dr. Fick told me she had read a paper written by Dr. James "Jimi" Cook regarding a new diagnosis and procedure for large dogs suffering from front leg lameness that seemed to defy diagnosis. She examined Eagle again and decided the new diagnosis fit him.*

*"After locating Dr. Cook, I sent an email out of the blue asking if he would treat Eagle since no one at UF had performed this procedure. He replied that his good friend was the head of orthopedics at UF and an excellent surgeon, but I was welcome to bring Eagle to the University of Missouri Veterinary Hospital and he would take care of him. I boldly asked Dr. Cook if he could come to UF to do the surgery. He said 'yes, and please call me Jimi.' Friends offered to pay his way to Florida, his hotel stay and his meals. Jimi asked that we merely pay his airfare.*

*"Surgery was done last June (2006) and physical therapy ended in December. Eagle is back to normal again. Not only did Jimi save my best friend and companion from a life of pain and misery, he also gave me back my service dog. Eagle is always anxious to help and we are inseparable. We found a friend for life in Jimi!*

*"Jimi is a complete, spiritual man who helps those in need, whether it is animals of all types, volunteer work in Africa or as a Big Brother. He is the best!"*

### **Northeast Regional Winner**

James O. Thomas

Eagle Veterinary Clinic, Havertown, Pa.

Nominated by: Doris B. Woodside

Doris wrote:

*"I have adopted eight cats from the Morris Animal Refuge in Philadelphia since 1974. My veterinarian has been Dr. James Thomas of Havertown. He has altered them and treated them for many ailments, including diabetes, cancer of the mouth and hyperthyroidism. Nothing is too much for him to handle. My beautiful marmalade tabby, Sunny, had diabetes. He went into shock. Dr. Thomas told me to bring him over right away. He gave him some intravenous fluids, because he was dehydrated. As I left his office, another person came in with a cat. This was Christmas Eve. When I thanked him, he said it didn't matter what day it was, as long as he was there. After two more episodes, I finally had to put Sunny to sleep.*

*"He has been associated with Pet Adoption and Lifecare Society (P.A.L.S.), a no-kill group on the outskirts of Philadelphia, for many years. He provides veterinary care for so many of their cats and kittens. His wife, Kay, helps him and is right beside him in all he does. They have many animals of their own. They took in a cat that was deemed un-adoptable because of an illness. The cat was very happy with them until she died. P.A.L.S. put out a bulletin about how wonderful Jim and Kay are.*

*"The following is a quotation: "We have been very fortunate to have Jim and Kay available to provide veterinary care for our cats and kittens. Their compassion and generosity are second to none. All of us at P.A.L.S. thank both of them so much from the bottom of our hearts for their unselfish dedication not only to our kitties, but also to all animals in need."*

*"I can't agree more. To me, Jim and Kay are not only great caretakers, but also true friends in need. I hope they can continue as caretakers to P.A.L.S. and all other animals in need."*

### **Southeast Regional Winner**

Bob Encinosa

Boyette Animal Hospital, Boyette, Fla.

Nominated by: Mary Beth Cammiller

Mary Beth wrote:

*"Our veterinarian, Dr. Bob Encinosa, is truly an exceptional individual whose compassion and medical expertise amaze us. Although we have many stories which illustrate this, one in particular comes to mind. When one of our dogs diagnosed with cancer had a particularly bad Saturday, Dr. Bob volunteered to meet us at his clinic that night to administer medications to give Max some relief. When his condition worsened on Sunday, Dr. Bob once again met us to help Max. His level of dedication enabled Max to enjoy a relatively pain-free weekend instead of one of suffering.*

*"When the disease progressed to the point where we knew it was time to put Max to sleep, Dr. Bob ensured that he was available anytime when needed. Many tears were shed that morning, including Dr. Bob's. The following weeks were a very sad time for us, but one bright spot came in the form of a sympathy card from Dr. Bob with an acknowledgement indicating he made a donation in memory of Max to a local nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of homeless animals. That one simple act touched our hearts.*

*“Dr. Bob’s compassion also extends beyond his practice. When one of his clients wanted to make a donation to Dr. Bob, he instead referred him to a local no-kill animal shelter in need of financial support. He is currently spearheading an effort to establish a facility to care for pets upon their owner’s death.*

*“My own experiences are just a few examples of Dr. Bob’s never-ending kindness. He is truly an outstanding veterinarian who provides extraordinary care. Although he certainly does not seek notoriety, Dr. Bob deserves recognition for his compassion, a trait that cannot be learned in medical school. It comes from the heart.”*

### **West Regional Winner**

Thomas R. Nickerson

Trinity Animal Hospital, Weaverville, Calif.

Nominated by: Cherie Bradley

Cherie wrote:

*“Dr. Nickerson is the best vet in America. Daily he shows compassion and caring for the animals and clients he works with, driving long distances at least once a week to serve those unable to travel to his office. As the only full-time veterinarian in a large county, he treats all animals from lizards to livestock and wildlife. Willing to give not only his time, but his heart to the community he serves. He is active in the Rotary Club, community theater, participates in school assemblies, talks to local organizations and works with the animal shelter to provide care where needed. As a proponent of continuing education, he attends many seminars and provides opportunities for his staff to pursue educational training as well.*

*“Dr. Nickerson has been known to discount services to those he knows are financially unable to treat an ill or injured pet. During local forest fires, he opens his office to all that need care or boarding without charge. During one, he cried when he had to tell a client her dog was dieing of cancer on the day she lost her house. His tears have been witnessed many times over the years; we think of our pets as family and so does he.*

*“Without Dr. Nickerson, Cricket, a small orange and white cat would not have lived to age 12. He first met her when she was only 3 and saw her through liver infections, kidney biopsies, and an e-coli infection. He left guests at dinner when she had fevers and cried as he helped her leave this world in December 2005. Before meeting him, my pets had never seen the same veterinarian more than twice. They did not treat them life family.”*

### **Southwest Regional Winner**

Timothy R. Stone

Rittiman Road Animal Hospital, San Antonio, Texas

Nominated by: Kathleen Hoffman

Kathleen wrote:

*“Dr. Tim R. Stone has been seeing my Pugs ever since I can remember. He always has taken wonderful care of them. About two years ago, I started San Antonio Pug Rescue. I asked him if he would be interested in treating rescued Pugs that required medical attention. He said he would be happy to, even at a discount. He has treated some of the worst case scenarios, with the most wonderful outcomes. Some Pugs were so ill that he would raise an eyebrow in disbelief that these little dogs managed to grow and thrive. He has treated Pugs that weren’t supposed to live, yet they flourished and were adopted by families who adored them.*

*“Dr. Stone taught me the difference between sarcoptic and demodex mange. He taught me about elongated palates, dehydration and kennel cough with my little pancake-faced Pugs. I have learned about vaccinations, cataracts and a dozen other diseases that plague my adorable little Pugs. I have learned that some Pugs require anesthesia to clip their nails. I have learned that some Pugs are more stubborn than others and that all Pugs are stubborn. I have learned how to quarter a baby aspirin and give a Pug a pill with my eyes shut. I have learned a lot from Dr. Stone.*

*“He cured my Pugs, and while I was wiping away my tears from fear of losing one, he comforted me as well. Dr. Stone is a busy man with a wonderful staff and a very large practice that always manages to fit me in when I have a Pug that needs care. One of the most important things I learned from Dr. Stone is that, along with good veterinary care, love surely goes a long way.”*