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Morris Animal Foundation: Leading the Way to Improved Animal Health

Kimberly Hayden

Morris Animal Foundation is a non-profit organization devoted to improving the health and well-being of companion animals and wildlife. The organization was started in 1948 by Mark Morris, DVM. Dr. Morris realized the need for humane health studies which were designed solely to benefit animals. Morris Animal Foundation disseminates the information gained from these studies to practicing veterinarians and veterinary institutions.

Morris Animal Foundation is one of only a few organizations that can honestly say that all contributions made to it go to the funding of animal programs and not to administration or fund raising. This is possible because returns from endowment investments cover these expenses.

Funding and the Scientific Advisory Board

Morris Animal Foundation prides itself on funding only the highest quality animal health studies. Studies which are proposed for funding go through a rigorous evaluation process by the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). The SAB consists of eight volunteer veterinarians from veterinary schools across the nation. They evaluate and rank these studies on the basis of scientific soundness, relevancy, humane treatment, and the past performance of investigator(s), among other criteria. The top studies are then proposed for funding. For those projects that receive funding, the evaluation procedure continues. Morris Animal Foundation realizes that it is very important to follow up on these projects. Members of the SAB investigate each study to ensure that the quality and scientific soundness of the project have been maintained. They will not tolerate bad science. In this way, Morris Animal Foundation can be confident that the money they allocate is going to promote only the highest quality projects, and in the end, better health for animals.

Since 1948, Morris Animal Foundation has sponsored more than 700 studies with total funds exceeding $15.2 million. This includes funding of projects by our very own Dr. Charles Thoen and Dr. Julie Jarvinen. This year alone Morris Animal Foundation is funding more than 80 studies at veterinary schools across the country. Current areas of study include canine cancer, equine colic, feline immunodeficiency virus, as well as antibiotic use in green iguanas, and the Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project monitoring the health of the mountain gorillas in Rwanda, Uganda, and the Congo. Still, many important studies which are recommended by the SAB go without funding simply because there are not enough funds available.

Importance to the Practicing Veterinarian

Morris Animal Foundation acts as a liaison between individuals and organizations which would like to improve animal health, and faculty at veterinary institutions which have the means to design and carry out studies to do this. As a practicing veterinarian, it is important to be aware of Morris Animal Foundation as a vital link in health studies which effect you, your clients, and their animals. Small animal practitioners in particular may be interested in getting involved in the Pet Memorial program, which allows the veterinarian to make a donation in memory of a client's pet. This program is very popular with clients. In fact, many clients respond by making their own donation in their pet's name. This is an ideal way for veterinarians to show they care about their clients and patients.

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1Kimberly Hayden is a second-year veterinary student at the Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

Iowa State University Veterinarian
How You Can Get Involved

Become a member! For $25, you can help contribute to increasing the quality of animal health. You will receive the newsletter and updates of exciting breakthroughs in animal health. As the Ballard Student for Morris Animal Foundation, I act as a liaison between the foundation and Iowa State University students and faculty. Please let me know if there is any information I can get for you regarding funding of projects, membership, current studies, or any other questions you might have. My email address is khayden@iastate.edu. You may also wish to visit the Morris Animal Foundation web page at http://www.MorrisAnimalFoundation.org.

VMAA at ISU Bestows Distinguished Service Award

Darrell Trampel, DVM, PhD

The Board of Directors of the Veterinary Medical Alumni Association (VMAA) at Iowa State University voted unanimously to award the Distinguished Service Award to Ms. Joan Kluge. Ms. Kluge has served the VMAA as an administrative assistant since March, 1991. Joan has been responsible for helping organize annual alumni receptions at the American Veterinary Medical Association convention, the North American Veterinary Conference, the Western States Veterinary Conference, and the Central Veterinary Conference. In addition, each year she helps plan and organize the Stange Awards presentation event and Homecoming celebration. Ms. Kluge organized and managed the sale of Gentle Doctor pins as part of a fundraising project which raised over $30,000 to renovate the F. K. Ramsey Alumni Room. In 1996, she compiled financial and other data required by the state of Iowa as a prerequisite to awarding a certificate of incorporation to the VMAA. Subsequently, this data was used to successfully obtain recognition as a tax-exempt corporation from the Internal Revenue Service. Joan has vigilantly worked to support the best interests of alumni association members and donated many unpaid hours in pursuit of that goal.

Previous recipients of the award were Dr. Paul Eness in 1986, Dr. Lorraine Hoffman in 1987, Dr. Robert Carithers in 1988, Dr. George Daniels in 1989, Dr. William Hoefle in 1990, and Dr. James McKean in 1992. The Distinguished Service Award includes a cash award of $1,000 from the VMAA.

\[\text{Dr. Trampel is Secretary/Treasurer of the VMAA at ISU and is a Professor in VDPAM at the Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine.}\]