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## UNH and Humane Society Form Partnership That's a Win-Win for Students and Animals

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DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire and the New Hampshire Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NHSPCA) have created a partnership in education that's a win-win for both organizations.

Students in UNH's Thompson School of Applied Science small animal care program are providing valuable help at the NHSPCA's Adoption Center in Stratham, and are gaining critical "hands-on" experience to compliment their classroom education.

"In the past, our small animal care program had to be creative as pets are not housed at UNH," says Jeri Zezula, associate professor of applied animal science. "Our school is focused on hands-on learning, and the NHSPCA had the animals and the need for our skills."

From 1979 to 1982, Zezula and her students had a lab in the unfinished upstairs of the old shelter. The building, however, became too small to accommodate all the students. Now, they practice their skills at the new Adoption Center, which opened its doors last summer.

Zezula secured a federal Carl Perkins Vocational Grant to launch the partnership. The money allowed for the purchase of equipment, as well as a three-year salaried position for an instructor to accompany the students. Dr. Ann Florio was hired to fill the new role.

Since teaming up with the NHSPCA, students and Florio come to the center three days a week for their small animal care practicum where they learn

techniques such as how to prepare and administer vaccinations, perform physical exams, and prepare and interpret various lab tests including feline leukemia and heartworm. They also groom animals, administer medications, evaluate animal behavior, and follow animals through the relinquishment and adoption process.

"They quickly became part of the team," says the NHSPCA staff of Dr. Florio and the students. "We feel very lucky to have a veterinarian in the building three times a week. We utilize her skills at every opportunity when we have an animal with a health issue."

ZeZula says the program is a success. "The students are beginning to get the connections between the importance of their on-campus classes and lab learning as it applies to real life. No matter what aspect of animal care these students go into, this hands-on experience is very important."

UNH student Amy Riendeau of Berlin says the experience she is gaining at the shelter is invaluable.

"The biggest benefit for me working at the shelter is the skills I've learned and will learn to promote myself to potential employers once I've graduated and move on with my career," Riendeau says. "One thing I learned that strengthened my desire to work with animals is that if it wasn't for places like shelters and animal clinics, none of these animals would be helped. Knowing that I can be part of this team gives me a wonderful feeling of being able to be that 'second chance' that just might save an animal's life. "

Jen Corbin, the Adoption Center's manager of animal care, adds that the program gives the NHSPCA staff an opportunity to impact the next generation of animal care professionals, creating future alliances not only for the NHSPCA but also for other humane organizations.

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