

# Compassionate veterinarian taking on new challenge

BY TRACY BIRKENHAUER  
STAFF WRITER

A kind touch, caring voice and skilled hands have proven successful elements for veterinary doctor David Carron.

For 21 years, he's treated countless sick, scared and frisky pets. He's also counseled the owners. In 1998, he purchased Plaza Veterinary Hospital from his former partner, John Richardson, who is now semi-retired.

Carron's compassionate demeanor and head for business will undoubtedly help him with his latest undertaking. On Jan. 28, Carron, 47, was named president of the Michigan Veterinary Medical Association, a 1,700-member organization based in the Lansing area. The presidency carries a one-year term.

Founded in 1833, the MVMA primarily focuses on member education, services, public information and state regulations.

"Essentially, it's like our union," Carron said.

The president runs the organization and heads the 25-member board of directors.

"I'm convinced he'll be a good president," said Peter Prescott, MVMA executive director. "He gets along well with people and he represents the profession well."

After more than 20 years of membership, Carron finally agreed it was his turn to head the group. He ran unchallenged.

"I scared away the competition," Carron joked from behind his cluttered desk.

He said although it's one of the most important aspects of the MVMA, education can be difficult to manage because there are so many types of veterinary practices, from institutional to regulatory. Some veterinary doctors treat only horses or cows. Others don't treat animals at all. "Ophthalmologists all do basically the same thing," Carron said. "We don't."

The second most essential service the MVMA provides is monitoring state legislation that impacts veterinarians. The group employs a lobbyist to promote its interests.

The MVMA currently is supporting House Bill 4903, which aims to amend the Public Health Code. It concerns animals abandoned at veterinary offices. The bill passed the state House and Senate and was sent to Gov. John Engler for approval early this month.

The law would redefine abandonment and allow veterinarians to dispose of abandoned animals after 10 days, not the current 25, if veterinarians meet certain legal requirements. Frequently, disposal doesn't mean death, it means the animal is sent to a shelter, unless the animal is ill.

## Helping colleagues

"Twenty-five days aren't so bad if it's a cute little kitty that's



No problem: Mary Ann Kashubosky hangs on to 9-month-old Radar as Dr. David Carron gives a vaccination.

STAFF PHOTOS BY ENLA BAZELER

been left, but if it's a mean rottweiler that wants to eat your head or a very sick animal, 25 days are an eternity," Prescott said. "It's a minor thing, but it's important to veterinarians. It doesn't happen very often, but when it does, it's a big problem. There isn't a veterinarian out there who won't have to deal with it at least once."

With so many issues affecting veterinarians' bottom lines, Carron wants to help his fellow doctors run their practices better. Many new or struggling veterinarians could use the help. "These are the things they don't really teach in schools," Carron said. "There are so many other things you have to learn about becoming a veterinary doctor, the business aspect sometimes gets ignored."

Carron learned about the business end of the profession from his former boss and partner, John Richardson who is a former MVMA president. In an ironic switch, the elder Richardson now works for Carron.

"It's been a super relationship," said Richardson, 67. "We are a nice complement to each other. I come on like gangbusters and he's quiet and unassuming. We attracted a great

clientele."

Richardson works one day a week and fills in for his boss when he needs time off. "I'd say I groomed him well," Richardson said. When Carron went to work for Richardson, he'd been out of college for two years and knew little about running a profitable business.

"He's doing a better job of it today," Richardson said. "They just don't teach you a lot of practice management in college. They teach you how to be a good doctor, but in today's world, management is one of the most important things you can learn. Schools are doing a better job of it now."

A 1977 Michigan State University graduate, Carron and his wife, Marlene, moved to the Farmington area in 1979. They have two children and several pets.

Katie is a pre-veterinary freshman at MSU and Kevin is a student at Farmington High School.

They have two dogs, four cats, a parrot, a gecko and a fish tank filled with assorted denizens of the deep.

Growing up with a dog and a cat in Ann Arbor, Carron always knew he would become a veterinarian.

He loved pets and his psychiatrist father proved an excellent role model.

"For me, becoming a veterinary doctor was a natural marriage of my interests," Carron said. "I never had any doubts." Carron has developed many meaningful relationships with local pet owners.

Anne Breneman could compliment her cat doctor for hours. Carron has successfully treated maybe 100 cats for the Backdoor Friends business owner.

"He's wonderful," she said. "You don't feel rushed with him. He spends more time with my cats than my family doctor spends with me."

## Tough task

Breneman has referred countless customers to him and she thinks the way he treats her clients reflects positively on her. "He's good!" she said. "He's seen a lot of my animals through a lot of sicknesses and he's always been terrific. He's just a really good doctor."

Breneman can remember calling Carron at midnight with an emergency.

"My mom's cat was dying and he got out of bed to come to my house and put her down," Breneman said. "I thought that was really sweet."

It may be an important part of his job, but Carron never gets used to euthanizing pets.

"It's not an easy thing we do," he said. "But we can perform that service and put an end to suffering for sick animals."

Just as Carron shares in the excitement of a newborn puppy, he also shares sorrow with people who have to let their pets go. He's cried with grieving pet owners. He offers clients grief counseling through the Southeast Michigan Veterinary Association.

"Once you decide that's your pet, you're instantly bonded," Carron said. "That's your baby. And it's hard to let go."

Carron's empathy and professionalism are what keep clients coming back.

"We treat people as we would like to be treated," Carron said. "They're friends, hopefully. And the pets are our family, too. That's what makes this practice work."

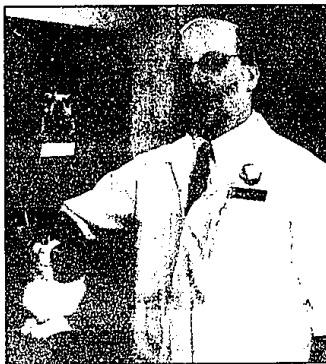
He said his office retains about 80 percent of its clientele, while the average is closer to 50 percent.

Breneman understands his secret to success.

"He's easy to talk to — and he's humble," she said. "He's just a nice, nice person. I don't think I could have found a better veterinarian."

She believes those qualities will also make him an excellent MVMA president. "They couldn't have chosen a better guy," she said.

No stray cat: Dr. David Carron has two resident cats in the office. This is Tally, who started out life as a stray.



# School board set to decide fate, feasibility of proposed programs

BY TIM SMITH  
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A spate of newly proposed curriculum programs received a favorable response from the Farmington Board of Education during its Feb. 29 regular meeting.

The list of eight District Support Council proposals — which could be piloted in 2000-01 if approved by the board — were introduced by Judy White, assistant superintendent for instructional services. If the board opts to add all eight during Tuesday's 7:30 p.m. meeting, the total cost to implement them would be approximately \$360,000.

"Even if we support them all," emphasized White during her remarks to the board, "it doesn't, at this point, mean we can fund them all."

Following the rundown of the proposals, school board member Cathy Webb urged district administrators to "find room in (the) budget for all of these."

## Teacher driven

According to White, the programs largely were sparked by teachers' ideas, and then submitted for approval to the District Support Council. The council is composed of administrators, teachers, parents, students and community members.

All proposals must match the goals of the district's Mission 2007 strategic planning report and align with what is already taking place curriculum-wise, White said.

"I hope you can see that, every year, the quality just keeps on coming," White noted. "It's pretty hard to know how we'd ever have to cut it (the list) if we had to."

Following are the eight site-based proposals and estimated costs to go forward next year:

■ **'Even if we support them all, it doesn't, at this point, mean we can fund them all.'**

Judy White  
—assistant superintendent  
Farmington Public Schools

■ **North Farmington High School - Radio/TV Broadcasting (\$37,792):**

White said the course, to be housed at the new TV-10 cable television production studio at North, is viewed as an "exciting component" that would give students hands-on exposure to the communications field and an opportunity to "produce programming that can be heard across the other two high schools."

■ **Farmington High School - Health First TriFit Wellness Technology for Exercise Physiology (\$38,018):**

The "interdisciplinary" course would combine physical education and biology. It would feature a "customized plan for weight loss, weight training," White said. "We see this as a wonderful extension in trying to help kids be healthy individuals."

In a summary for the course, it was stressed that the pilot program would not duplicate what is already being taught at FHS.

■ **Middle School Mentoring (\$44,919):**

Dunckel, Power and Warner middle schools want to follow East Middle School's lead and set up a mentoring program that would provide up to 40 seventh and eighth graders at each school with a valuable learning experience.

Board members were supportive of the idea. "We can't do enough in this area," said trustee Bobbie Feldman.

But, countered White, one

problem might be locating enough quality mentors to work with the students.

■ **Harrison High School Academic Lab (\$117,400):**

The most expensive of the proposals, it would recommend that students have access to PLATO, a computer-based system that provides interactive, individualized instruction on many subjects. White said the progress of participating students would be charted.

Board member Gary Sharp said he liked the concept and suggested it be expanded to the other high schools.

"As we always do, if one school starts something and experiences success, they share it with others," replied White.

■ **Adventures in Transitions - Eighth and Ninth Grade Transition Summer School (\$15,270):**

The program would prepare 45 incoming freshmen to help them "gain social and organizational skills and insight into themselves as people and learners."

■ **Camp Tesuca - Middle School Summer Technology Camp (\$14,153):**

Middle school students would participate in a week-long enrichment technology program, with "real world" technology the theme.

■ **Summer Technology Academy (\$46,631):**

The proposed project calls for a three-day technology seminar for educators of students in grades 4-9. Educators would attend morning and afternoon breakout sessions and then collaborate for team planning.

■ **Delta/Middle School - Middle School Delta Team Concept Project (\$22,200 for 2000-01; \$31,400 for 2001-02):**

Teachers at each middle school would volunteer to be the Delta team contact for gifted students, and help communicate related issues and information to other teachers and parents.

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