

The Nature of Our Profession



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Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.

—Albert Einstein

My husband Darrell and I like to get down and dirty, in the very best way. A few years ago, we started a community garden on our church's land. It was free to anyone who wanted to come and harvest. We used the fresh vegetables to supplement the mobile food pantry that comes to our community.

We recently expanded our desire to grow things by purchasing a 40-acre farm. I was struck by the "connected" feeling shared by a farmer's love of the land and a veterinary professional's love of all creatures, large and small. There's a sacred communion that occurs—a respect that transcends the never-ending, sometimes heartbreaking, work and extraordinary needs of the living plants and animals we choose to nurture.

WHAT ATTRACTS US TO OUR PROFESSION?

Is there something in our nature that yearns to serve? Or is it something in the nature of our profession that calls our name? Perhaps it's harmonic convergence of both that brings us to the decision to commit to caring, whether it's tending to the farm or to animals. Despite the extras our areas of specialty require, there's the common denominator of wanting to help, protect, and learn from those in our care. Why do we choose this work, given the adversities on top of the frustrations and difficulties? The answer is always, "Love. We do it for love."

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO SERVE

In my work as an instructional technologist for veterinary technology distance learning at Purdue University, I have the privilege of educating and encouraging students at a young age to pursue their passions for our profession. It's a beautiful thing to witness when we show them how to match their burning enthusiasm with their careers.

Through my volunteer role as superintendent of the FFA (formerly known as Future Farmers of America) Veterinary Science Career Development Event (CDE), I see firsthand the natural relationship between agriculture and veterinary health care. I always thought the FFA was about farming and, therefore, only for farm kids; however, it is an organization dedicated to developing students to be the leaders of tomorrow.

The veterinary science CDE educates students about the fields and careers available in veterinary science. Check it out and let others know about it: ffa.org/participate/cdes/veterinary-science.

WHAT I KNOW FOR SURE

The value of having mentors cannot be quantified. I have had excellent ones, both veterinary technicians and veterinarians. They challenged me to learn, supported me, and guided me through my professional career.

When you work at a college that has both veterinary doctorate and veterinary technology curriculums, you can't help but learn every day. Whatever your job is, I encourage you to find a mentor—someone who supports and encourages you, yet also holds you accountable. Tap into the experience of your peers, your mentors, your family, and, most important, your patients. That systemic rejuvenation will keep you young at heart, hopefully resulting in you becoming a mentor!

In my career, which spans almost 30 years, several other things have become clear to me: first, that learning is a daily activity, and second, that the best way to revitalize ourselves and help our clients is to grow our knowledge and expertise. Both personally and professionally, we must continuously challenge ourselves. We'll never know it all, but we can commit to discovery till the cows come home (that's the farmer coming out in me!).

HOW THE NAVC FITS INTO THE EQUATION

The NAVC is an amazing, forward-thinking organization. They believe in the veterinary team. They believe in the future of veterinary medicine. They believe in challenging everyone to grow and learn. It is not about the money; it is about doing what is right for the members of the profession. Providing free VetFolio access to veterinary professionals in Africa—who does something like that? The NAVC!

The NAVC staff and my fellow members of the board of directors are passionate about giving back to the profession that we love. We are a team. They inspire me and motivate me to want to do more, learn more, and share more. The NAVC has always represented what I believe to be true: that in order to grow, we have to be willing to step out of our comfort zone and try new things. It is through these actions that we will continue to push this profession to become better and serve our patients and clients with the best veterinary medicine has to offer. It's our nature.

"...each of us is a living system within a greater living system, connected to each other in more ways than we can fathom." —Paul H. Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson

—Paige Allen, Director, NAVC Board of Directors