

2021 VECCS Practice Leader Of The Year Award Finalists



Susanne DeCook, CVT
Clinical Manager of Nursing
MedVet Chicago

Nominated by:
Christeen McKeon

I have been in the veterinary field since I was 15 years old. I have worked in emergency and critical care medicine at large private small animal specialty practices since 2002. I have been a CVT since 2005 and am eligible and plan to sit for the VTS in ECC exam in 2021. My driving passion in critical care medicine is to be a voice for the voiceless. I feel that speaks to all aspects of what I(we) do as an ECC technician and as a leader. I take my responsibilities very seriously. I truly enjoy advocating for the patients, clients, and the team, supporting my team member's education, career advancement, and mental health, educating clients, and ensuring we are providing the absolute best possible care to both the patients and clients, and our team. I absolutely love what I do and hope to provide the best support possible. I am so proud of the medicine we practice, the team of incredible people I am blessed to currently work with and have worked with in the past and cannot imagine myself doing anything else. I was meant for this career. I am truly grateful to even be considered for this incredible honor. Thank you so very much!



Stephanie Garcia
Education Coordinator
Anne Arundel Veterinary
Emergency Clinic

Nominated by:
Kaitlin Jacobs

Stephanie Garcia is the education coordinator and technician supervisor at Chesapeake Veterinary Referral Center for the Anne Arundel Veterinary Emergency Clinic. She is the managing director of the Academy of Educators in Veterinary Sciences that creates free resources for education coordinators across the world. In Stephanie's free time, she collaborates with local public schools in Anne Arundel County to create primary, secondary and post-secondary veterinary education programs and is advocating for the creation of more affordable accredited veterinary technology programs in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Interestingly enough, her career began when she decided to stop working as a fire-breather and stilt walker for an Orlando-based circus to become a receptionist at a local veterinary hospital. Clearly, she left one circus for another. 13 years later, she has had the pleasure of working in a variety of hospitals across the country during her time as a traveling relief technician. She is trained in ophthalmology, dentistry, surgery, cardiology, internal medicine, oncology, neurology, and of course, her favorite of all time, emergency and critical care. She now dedicates her life to veterinary education and training programs for specialty hospitals. Her passion for veterinary medicine is contagious and she leads her teams by teaching them how to identify a person's talent, nurture that talent, and encourage them to look to themselves for the solution.



Cassandra Kochevar
Hospital Manager, Peoria
Arizona Veterinary
Emergency & Critical Care
Center

Nominated by:
Tonya Fliflet

Cassandra Kochevar was born and raised in Massachusetts. She graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a BS in Animal Science and a concentration in pre-veterinary coursework, initially intending to become a veterinarian. Life led her down a different path when she worked in large animal medicine at Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine for 3+ years, and then worked as a small animal veterinary technician. In these roles she soon learned she had a passion for veterinary management. She particularly enjoys being an advocate for the staff as they grow and encouraging them to be the best version of themselves. She has been a Hospital Manager for over 5 years, 4 in General practice and 1.5 in Emergency & Critical Care at AVECCC. In her free time, Cassie loves to spend time gardening and going on adventures with her 4-year-old son Tatum, and her husband Larry. Cassie's family is rounded out by two dogs and two cats: Jack, Guinness, Celaeno and Kitten.



Emily Vogt DVM, BSc
Emergency Veterinarian,
Director
Boundary Bay Veterinary
Specialty Hospital

Nominated by:
Dr. Jillian Thatcher

Dr. Emily Vogt graduated from Oregon State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 2007. She worked in general practice for 11 years, followed by an internship in Toronto, Ontario at the Veterinary Emergency Clinic of Toronto in 2017. There she fell in love with Emergency and critical care medicine and joined the BBVSH team in November of 2018. When she's not at work she can be found out with her dog Wren, on the beaches and mountains in and around Vancouver, traveling, or playing her guitar.

While Dr. Vogt is based out of our emergency animal hospital in Langley, she - and all our emergency vets - are ready to serve pet owners within all Greater Vancouver.



Nicole Wingard
Hospital Administrator
VRCC Veterinary Specialty
and Emergency Hospital

Nominated by:
Morgan Wright

Nicole joined the VRCC team in March 2018. Prior to coming on board, she worked in the human side of healthcare for over 10 years in practice management and development of clinics all over the United States. She graduated in 2007 with a B.S in Healthcare Management from Lourdes College located in Sylvania, Ohio.

Nicole takes her role seriously understanding that our patients are important family members and deserve the best care. She feels strongly in that it is our duty to educate and empower the client to make decisions that are right for their pets and family. She hopes to facilitate VRCC's vision of a hospital that is constantly improving and working hard to be the best. She hopes to continue moving the clinic in a direction of great service, exceptional communication, and unquestionable trust between you the client, and us the staff at VRCC.

Nicole grew up in Toledo, Ohio and now resides in Parker with her husband, two daughters and her adopted rescue dog named "Ariel". She enjoys watching college football, spending time with her family & friends, and reading outdoors in the Colorado sunshine.