

# AVAR-Sponsored Veterinary Students Share Experiences from Taking Action for Animals conference

*This past summer, AVAR sponsored three veterinary students at the Taking Action for Animals (TAFAs) conference held in Washington, D.C. The conference is an annual educational event for animal advocates. These students shared the highlights of their learning experiences at TAFAs.*

"The highlight of the TAFAs conference, for me, was lobby day. I was nervous about speaking to my representatives – Would they really listen to me? Does she really care about animal-related issues? I learned that my representatives want to hear from their constituents. I also learned that it's not hard to get involved in the political process, and it's so rewarding to be an active member of society. As a future veterinarian, I have an obligation to advocate for the welfare of my patients. Lobby day has taught me that there is no reason to be afraid to carry out that obligation in a more political, and possibly a more public, forum."

*Vanessa Rizzo, Western University of Health Sciences, Class of 2009*

"Taking Action for Animals 2007 got right to the heart of the matter - individuals entrusted with the responsibility of alleviating animal suffering need not create nor condone inhumane practices. Humane alternatives will become more abundant as long as we embrace them, both in our personal and professional lives. As we move into a more socially conscientious era, my hope is that more veterinary students and veterinarians will speak out for the billions of animals whose lives are disregarded, whether in production industries, research, or even our own classrooms. TAFAs made it clear that society depends on veterinarians to set the standards of how animals are treated; we should make every effort to set those standards high."

*Eileen Jefferson, University of Illinois, Class of 2008*



*Eileen Jefferson (left) and Vanessa Rizzo (right) were two of the AVAR-sponsored veterinary students who attended the Taking Action for Animals conference.*

"The highlight for me at the TAFAs conference - even more than the plenaries and panels - was talking to other animal advocates. Bringing together the vanguard of animal rights and welfare was productive. More importantly, it was invigorating and inspiring. I found animal activists in my area, even on my block! I sat at the feet of giants - and then recruited them to visit UPenn! I learned about areas of animal activism I barely knew existed from the people who first envisioned them! Sometimes the world of animal activism is a very lonely place. Perhaps it is especially isolating while in veterinary school and trying everyday to help your future colleagues recognize the role of every veterinarian in speaking up for those who are voiceless. TAFAs helped me to connect to remarkable individuals who are remaking our world everyday; it helped me build a network of role models, heroes, and friends."

*Sandra J. Platt, University of Pennsylvania, Class of 2011*

## Oregon State University Surgery Program

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Corvallis. OSU has further expanded its surgery and clinical training program this year with the establishment of a shelter medicine program at the Oregon Humane Society in Portland. A new Animal Medical Learning Center opened in September at the shelter, which is projected to provide medical care to approximately 10,000 animals per year, including approximately 5,000 spay or neuter surgeries. Each OSU student will be required to complete a two-week rotation at the facility and will perform approximately 30 surgeries during that rotation. OSU has a full-time faculty member overseeing this program along with an OSU courtesy faculty

member based at the humane society who supervises the students.

Dr. Susan Tornquist, OSU's Associate Dean for Student and Academic Affairs, says the new shelter medicine program complements the surgery training at the Small Animal Hospital. "Students receive their core training in surgery and anesthesia here and learn surgical and anesthesia skills hands-on at the College of Veterinary Medicine under the close supervision of board-certified surgeons and anesthetists. Then, they have ample opportunity to improve their skills by performing large numbers of surgeries at the humane society's Animal Medical Learning Center."