

ALLIANCES BETWEEN AKC CLUBS AND VETERINARY SCHOOLS PROVE TO HAVE GREAT REWARDS FOR BOTH

Ann Wallin, Atlanta Kennel Club

MEDICAL MATTERS

The Atlanta Kennel Club has enjoyed a close relationship with The University of Georgia School of Veterinary Medicine spanning over 20 years. This relationship has flourished and has provided great benefits to our club as well as to the vet school.

The Atlanta Kennel Club began by donating money each year to The Sundowner's Fund which helps to defray the cost of needed vet care for elderly citizens who do not have the means to pay for costly surgery or other veterinary expenses for their beloved dogs. We also donated funds to the Small Animal Clinic to help provide for equipment and other needed non budgeted items. During this time we invited various professors from the vet school to be guest speakers at our club meetings. These were most informative and covered a vast array of topics regarding new procedures and surgical techniques, specific dog related diseases and current canine studies at the vet school. This close association provided us direct contact with the Dean and Assistant Dean of the school as well as many of their top department heads.

The Atlanta Kennel Club has also provided yearly scholarship money to students who are from the state of Georgia specializing in canine medicine and who demonstrate financial need. These are given in honor of distinguished deceased members of our club. Each year it is one of the highlights of our club activities to send club officers along with family members of our honorees to the vet school's annual awards ceremony in Athens, Georgia.

The program lists our donation and the individual names in whose memory they are given. These are announced as we are recognized and we have the honor of sitting with the students who are the recipients of the awards. There are approximately 200 students attending plus the entire faculty. Here we get the opportunity to talk to the students about all aspects of our club and our sport. It is a great opportunity to educate a new crop of veterinarians about the sport of pure bred dogs. This has always proven to be a wonderful evening for us, the family members and the students as well. In addition to our participation, two of our past members pledged a substantial donation from their estate to the School of Veterinary Medicine. This donation is held in a perpetual trust which also provides for several scholarships each year in their memory and is administered by one of our members, Neal Bates.

Because of the long standing relationship we have had with the School of Veterinary Medicine, The Atlanta Kennel Club was awarded a special plaque recognizing all of our support to the school and this plaque is now proudly displayed at The University of Georgia. Their professors continue to be available to us for consultation and as educational resources. In addition when the Commissioner of Agriculture was forming a new liaison committee to his department (The Companion Animal Advisory Committee) he called the Dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine for recommendations of qualified candidates. Members of the Atlanta Kennel Club

were the first ones to receive the Dean's endorsement to serve on this committee.

My club was also invited to present a program to the Canine Club, composed of veterinary students specializing in canine medicine. Carmen Battaglia, Ginger Aldrich and I gave a presentation about our kennel club, aspects of the sport of pure bred dogs and the AKC/ CAR initiatives. We had a great interaction with the students and came to realize how little they know about us as pure bred dog breeders and exhibitors, The American Kennel Club and our sport. Further education of the veterinarians coming out of our schools is much needed.

We are very proud to have this wonderful ongoing relationship with The University of Georgia School of Veterinary Medicine and since our first association several other All-Breed Clubs and some specialty clubs in our area have also joined in to provide scholarships to the vet students in need. Our collective presence is definitely felt at this institution.

In conclusion, it is my recommendation, based on The Atlanta Kennel Club's most positive experiences, that your club invest the time it takes to partner with your closest vet school and establish a relationship which can prove to be most beneficial not only to the school, but to your club, and to the whole sport of pure bred dogs as well.