

CREATING A FAMILY FRIENDLY PRACTICE

Pat Kennedy Arrington, DVM

Hospital Director, Jefferson Animal Hospitals

- Successful Veterinary Practitioners are usually very big fish in a very small pond (our neighborhood).
- Most of us are not “famous” but we’re usually well respected in our “Neighborhood Ponds”.
- I happen to like my “Neighborhood Pond” and if I’m going to find practice satisfying, then I want to touch as many lives as possible and contrive to have my patients live as long as possible. How do I do that?
- What do clients want?
 - ❖ For you to recognize them and their pet when they walk in the door and for you to LIKE their pet .
 - ❖ Friendly, knowledgeable staff who smile a lot.
 - ❖ For their pet not to be afraid and enjoy the visit (we’re the treat place).
 - ❖ Invite the kids and make it fun, get them involved
 - Look at ear mites through the microscope (and you don’t have to charge for the cytology)
 - Use the stethoscope to let them listen to their heart and their pets. Which one is faster?
 - Look through the oto-scope, Count the breaths, respiratory rate.
 - Use Healthy Pet.com for the kids section: games and puzzles (you can print them)
 - Give them a quiz on animal facts. Don’t talk down to them.
 - The list is endless. Most of us already know this intuitively.
 - ❖ You, your staff and the pet owners are the team that determines the best plan for their pet.
 - ❖ Listen to your client! And take classes to increase your listening skills! Ask your staff for a critique. You’re probably not listening to them either.
 - ❖ Provide value for your services at all times. Is your wellness exam worth what you’re charging?
- Be visible in your community.
 - ❖ Show your passion!
 - ❖ Talk about pet medicine at schools, ladies groups, any group you can find. You’re the expert.
 - ❖ Attend your local Chamber of Commerce meetings, local, city and state.
 - ❖ Join the Kiwanis or the Elks or anything to get involved. These are TEACHING moments.
 - ❖ Volunteer: Feral Cat surgeries, local shelters, give discounts to these groups, it won’t kill you.
 - ❖ Find homes for those stray cats, don’t send them to the pound. (after you vaccinate, Felv test and spay).
 - ❖ ALWAYS carry your business cards to hand out and don’t be shy about giving free advice.
- As a 24 hour practice, we perform an unusual number of euthanasias .
 - ❖ And my staff is very, very good and very compassionate and we receive an enormous amount of thank you notes, cookies, other edible goodies and expressions of thankfulness that we know we’ve made a difference in helping this family with their final decision.
 - ❖ BUT, don’t forget about your staff’s compassion fatigue. Do you have the test?
 - ❖ Do you have staff meetings to address this issue?
- We try hard to be a pet friendly practice using Feliway diffusers in our smaller cat exam rooms for our wellness exams. We send home a feliway wipe for the next exam or mail it to the client.
- We also spray feliway on a kerchief or DAP for the dogs to reduce anxiety. All the exam rooms at our Fern Creek location have big picture windows which the pet’s love. They watch the traffic outside and are totally entertained. Clients are happy when their pets are happy.
- We have also branded ourselves at our Fern Creek practice as the “Treat Place”. Our staff are trained to provide positive reinforcement for toe nail trims, blood collections, or injections.
- We also use Peanut butter as a “bribe” but alert the clients to let us know about peanut allergies in the family.