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Recent investments in talent and technology enhance **Hickory Veterinary and Specialty Hospital's** ability to provide comprehensive, 24/7 care for pets of every feather.

by **ERIN FLYNN JAY**
photos by **JODY ROBINSON**

Hickory Veterinary and Specialty Hospital in Plymouth Meeting has undergone quite a transformation over the past three years.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, third-generation veterinarian William J. Kay Jr., V.M.D., DACVIM (neurology), and his wife and partner Tiffany Kay, V.M.D., have revitalized the family-owned practice by offering emergency 24-hour care, adding to its expertise in specialty medicine, and expanding the clinical staff from four doctors to 18 full-time veterinarians.

Hickory Veterinary and Specialty Hospital now provides a full range of veterinary care, from wellness visits and treatment for chronic conditions, to specialty care such as critical care, cardiology, neurology, oncology, ophthalmology, radiology, reproduction, and surgery. Dr. Tiffany believes the practice's evolution helped meet an unfulfilled need in the community, particularly in regard to emergency medicine.

"We wanted to be the place that would always be open," she says, "and not have to go on a pause for patients."

Dr. Will attributes the practice's growth to a lot of hard work and planning, but he believes it was all worth it because of the enhanced value he and his



Dr. William J. Kay Jr., a third-generation veterinarian, specializes in neurology.

team can offer to the community. The Kays credit Hickory Veterinary and Specialty Hospital's success to the efforts of their team members and a network of referring veterinarians who have been happy to see the practice become a comprehensive, 24/7 resource for their clients.

Neurology is a good example; Hickory Veterinary and Specialty Hospital has enhanced its diagnostic capabilities with advanced MRI and CT imaging, all overseen by Dr. Will.

"We're able to do everything on site that we need to do," he says. "We can diagnose brain or spinal cord issues and immediately provide surgical services or other ancillary services if needed. A lot of vet places rely on and work very closely with emergency services because a lot of neurology cases are time sensitive. ... [Neurology] is my specialty, but it's also about being able to do this at Hickory, and being able to do it for our community."

Earlier this year Dr. Tiffany completed her certification in physical rehabilitation, which goes hand in hand with neurology and orthopedics—helping dogs walk again after spinal-cord problems or other orthopedic issues that compromise their mobility. "We have two surgeons here," she says, "so rehab goes very well with the orthopedic surgeries that they do for knee issues and fracture repairs, among other surgeries."

The Kays lead a highly capable team of clinicians, managers, and employees who embrace the practice's client-first—and pet-first—culture.

"We now have some terrific specialists, but it's not just about the specialty," Dr. Tiffany says. "It's about having a nice person, a good personality, somebody who cares about client interaction and working well

with the team that's underneath them, and those who are willing to be collaborative. That's how you provide the best care."

Recent enhancements aside, Hickory Veterinary and Specialty Hospital intends to further expand its specialty services in the future.

"We started growing, rebuilding the culture here, expanding the main doctor pool, and then we really focused on emergency care," says Dr. Will. "We're looking towards expanding the services that we can provide from a specialty level. So hopefully you'll see some new stuff from us in the next year or so with that."

The campus includes The Hickory Pet Inn, a boarding facility founded by Dr. Will's mother, Nancy O. Brown, V.M.D., DACVS, DACVIM (oncology), that offers overnight boarding for dogs and cats, as well as doggie daycare and "play care." The inn is booked through the summer and on many weekends throughout the year.

"We want to be a place where people can bring their dogs for everything, not just emergencies," Dr. Will says. "Knowing that clients are able to go on vacation and keep a pet in a facility adjacent to a practice that provides continual veterinary care is a nice safeguard and gives peace of mind for people. If there is a medical problem or some issue, we can hopefully address it quickly, so they know their pets are in good hands."

Family First

Truly a family enterprise, Hickory Veterinary and Specialty Hospital has been a staple of the community for generations. Dr. Will finds special meaning in continuing the tradition begun by his grandfather, William J. Brown, V.M.D., who founded his veterinary practice in the 1940s and moved it to Plymouth Meeting in 1956.

"A family-owned practice is harder and harder to find these days in veterinary medicine," Dr. Will says. "We're really proud of that fact and really proud that we were able to revitalize the hospital that I grew up in and that my grandfather founded. Tiffany has been able to come in and make this her baby, too."

The Kays have two sons, ages three and six. Both boys spend a lot of time on the grounds—just like Dr. Will did when he was young.

"The boys come by and wreak havoc like I always used to on the clinic floor," he adds. "We're an inclusive place that has very little disconnect between the top and the bottom. We want to be approachable and to be a place that has that extra special touch that you don't get with a different corporate structure."

The Kays' eldest son watched his dad perform surgery this summer. "He was really great," Dr. Will says of his son. "He had his gear on and was gowned up. He listened and he was interested over an impressive 45 minutes. It was pretty cool."

Will the Kays keep the business in the family for future generations? "We'll see what they want to do," Dr. Will adds. "There's no pressure." ■



Dr. Tiffany Kay recently completed her certification in physical rehabilitation.

Hickory Veterinary and Specialty Hospital | Hickory Pet Inn

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