

suburban life

The Life of an Artist
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Dr. Tiffany Kay (far right) spearheads the team at the Ambler office of Hickory Veterinary, joined by fellow veterinarians Drs. Mike Messina and Jaclyn O'Pella.

Reigning Cats and Dogs

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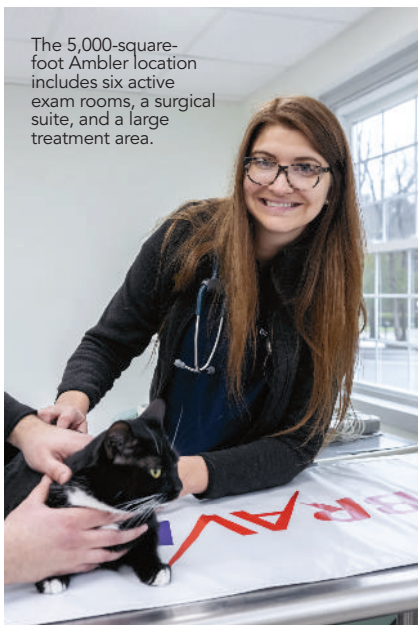
FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESSES ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN THESE DAYS. The dwindling number of such enterprises makes it all the more special when a practice such as Hickory Veterinary builds on a family legacy that has been more than 75 years in the making.

Hickory Veterinary is owned and operated

by veterinarian William J. Kay Jr., V.M.D., DACVIM, who specializes in neurology, and his wife and partner Tiffany Kay, V.M.D., CCRP. Dr. Will represents the third generation of practitioners in his family to devote their careers to caring for and healing pets. His grandfather founded a veterinary practice in

the Philadelphia neighborhood of Mt. Airy in 1947, and the family has been passionate about animal wellness ever since.

This dedication shines throughout Hickory Veterinary's flagship location in Plymouth Meeting, where veterinarians and specialists offer services including primary care, dentistry,



The 5,000-square-foot Ambler location includes six active exam rooms, a surgical suite, and a large treatment area.

rehab and acupuncture, neurology, ophthalmology, oncology, radiology, farewell services, and surgery. Boarding for cats and dogs and pet grooming are available at the Hickory Pet Inn, which shares the property. In addition, the practice offers emergency services all day, every day, so that pet patients and their parents can have peace of mind knowing that they can access the best possible care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

With growing demand for its many offerings, it's no wonder the practice's busy schedule prompted the Drs. Kay to look for opportunities to expand. Their search culminated in the November 2023 opening of a satellite Hickory Veterinary office in Ambler.

"We've been growing pretty rapidly over the last few years, and we started having an issue with exam-room space," Dr. Will shares. "We've always been a hybrid practice,

and as we grew and emergency services continue to grow, it just seemed logical to start looking for space for primary care."

Fortuitously, the site they came across had a storied history in the community.

"We found an old Chestnut Hill Hospital building in a really good location—close, but not too close," Dr. Will says. "The stars aligned, and we got it done."

In many ways, the former hospital was a perfect fit. The building had to be outfitted to meet the practice's specialized needs. The 5,000-square-foot space includes six active exam rooms, a surgical suite, and a large treatment area. Designed to be an outpatient facility, the Ambler location offers general health and wellness services as well as common surgeries such as spay and neuter procedures and dental health care.

"We've had a great reception," Dr. Tiffany says. "The clients in this community are so nice. The building had been abandoned for several years before we took over, and it was a place where people walked their dogs, so we had lots of people stop in, ask us questions, and end up coming to see us with their pet."

Dr. Will adds, "We even have clients who say they used to get their own shots here for human issues here at the old facility."

Dr. Tiffany spearheads the Ambler team, joined by Jaelyn O'Pella, V.M.D., of the flagship office and newcomer Mike Messina, V.M.D. Eventually the Drs. Kay hope to expand the roster to five or six veterinarians.

"It's always exciting to start something new, something fresh," Dr. Will says. "Even though this is a Hickory Veterinary practice, it is still a new entity."

With the arrival of Dr. Messina, the Ambler office has been able to expand its hours. The office now offers services Monday through Saturday starting at 8 a.m., as well as extended hours on Tuesday and

Thursday—until 7 p.m.—to accommodate pet owners constrained by work and other obligations.

While the bulk of Hickory Veterinary's pet patients are of the cat-and-dog variety, practitioners at both locations can see animals including birds, reptiles, and certain other exotic species.

In addition to their daily caseload, the Drs. Kay also make time to give back to local pets in need of care. In particular, they work with a Wayne-based rescue organization called Down and Out Delta Paws, which rescues cats and dogs from desperate situations in parts of the U.S. Southeast and matches those animals with their "forever homes." In addition, the practice has taken on pro bono work spaying and neutering so-called community cats, often referred to as feral cats, which live outdoors without human care. Most recently, the practice sterilized 17 cats from an outdoor colony that had grown to an unmanageable size.

"With our Ambler location, we want to emphasize that we are going to maintain the high-quality, boutique-style, customer service-forward practice that Hickory has always tried to be," Dr. Will says. "Our primary goal is to create good experiences for clients and their pets."

While the Drs. Kay are excited about the growth of the Ambler office, the duo is perhaps even more enthusiastic about some other expansion news—this time on the home front. They will soon welcome their third child, a little girl, though both agree there is "no pressure" for her to carry on the family veterinary tradition just yet. ■



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