

American Kennel Club Update

John Lyons
Chief Operating Officer
AKC

Larry Sorensen
Director of Public Education
AKC

John Lyons congratulated the CHF for “another remarkable health conference” and gave participants an overview of several AKC programs.

The newest, AKC Veterinary Outreach, is a way of sharing information and ideas with veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and students. The program’s goal is to help the profession deliver the best possible care to dogs by providing background information for practitioners and their clients, supporting research, and funding scholarships for veterinary health professionals.

Scholarships are an important part of the picture. Lyons said five of the 12 students attending the conference were AKC scholarship recipients; he noted that scholarship funding “establishes a strong purebred information resource by producing future leaders in the pet health industry.” He listed several individuals whose achievements “demonstrate their dedication to their sport, and to the dog community as a whole,” and acknowledged Bayer’s donation of more than \$100,000 to fund 25 veterinary technician scholarships.

To be considered for a scholarship, a student must be enrolled in a veterinary or veterinary technician program accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association. Winners are selected based on their academic achievement and breadth of experience, Lyons said. Veterinary students are selected by their schools; veterinary technician students apply through the AKC website.

The AKC also reaches out to the veterinary community through college seminars, and by attending veterinary conferences. With funding from Bayer, Lyons said, the organization offers a copy of *The Complete Dog Book* to every veterinary student in the United States.

AKC also runs an internship program to support leadership development and nurture careers for young professionals with a background and interest in the dog community. In seven years, he said, the program has hosted 39 interns who worked at 50 different positions in 29 AKC departments. Six of the interns were subsequently hired as full-time staff.

Lyons said a student must be enrolled in an accredited college to apply for an AKC internship, and must have completed at least one year of study before the internship

begins. Winning candidates must have a competitive grade point average and a strong interest in purebred dogs.

The AKC Veterinary Network creates a bridge between the purebred dog clubs and the veterinary community, Lyons said. Participating veterinarians receive AKC materials for their practices, office listings on the AKC website, research updates, a newsletter, and new customer leads. So far, more than 3,200 veterinarians have joined the program.

Lyons announced that the AKC will move into its new, state-of-the-art operations center in Raleigh next year, and will donate 2,500 square feet of office space to the CHF. “We understand and appreciate the importance of the AKC Canine Health Foundation,” he said, “and we are eager to contribute to its success in the future.”

Larry Sorensen described the resources available to help purebred dog owners become community ambassadors for responsible dog ownership. Breeders and owners might think the time for advocacy is over when anti-canine legislation has been defeated, but “now’s the time to be proactive,” he said. “The idea is to prevent legislation through education.”

Sorensen described the AKC resources available to clubs and individuals involved in public education or public education training. The public education department also organizes multi-club events to help recruit purebred dog owners into their Parent Clubs. AKC’s goal is to hold 10 multi-club events across the United States next year, so “this is the time for your club to plan to hold an educational match in 2008.”