

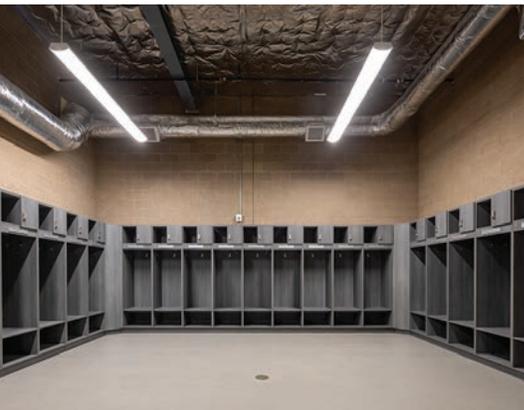
MEDICAL MATTERS

Healing & Horses

Dr. Monica Zilkoski's bond with horses keeps her grounded and connected to her work as a foot and ankle surgeon.



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Contents

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PETS & WELLNESS

8

Dr. Peters & the Zoo

Dr. Kelsey Peters shares how her “zoo” of pets brings her calm and helps protect her from burnout.

11

Eugene Springfield Cat Lounge

Dr. Michelle Wyatt and Sam Spayde highlight how pets support better health, cognition, and well-being.

12

Member Profile

Dr. Monica Zilkoski, a nurse turned orthopedic foot and ankle surgeon, rediscovers renewal through dressage.

16

Serenity Lane

Serenity Sam, a certified comfort dog, helps build connection during addiction recovery and strengthens community among staff members.

19

The American Medical Assoc.

Tanya Albert Henry highlights how therapy dogs help doctors and nurses reduce stress and boost morale during the workday.

LCMS MISSION STATEMENT
The Lane County Medical Society is a professional organization that represents, unifies, and supports its physician members as they practice medicine. The Society promotes the interests of member physicians and advocates for the health of the community.



21

Advertisor Spotlight

The Eugene Ballet welcomes LCMS to the Hult Center for a sneak peek of its locally crafted production of *Dracula*.

Disclaimer: *Medical Matters* is published by Lane County Medical Society (LCMS). The Lane County Medical Society Board, staff, and hired contractors are not responsible for any content information, accuracy, and views submitted to us. Content published is provided by their subjects and/or authors. Views do not necessarily align with those of LCMS nor constitute professional advice. Consult your medical (or other) professional where applicable. The LCMS Board and staff shall not be held responsible for any decisions or actions made based on information within this magazine.

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Chaos, Comfort, and Canines

Kianna — My dogs are the epitome of unconditional love. They lick away tears when I cry, are personal heaters and weighted blankets in the winter, and are always so happy to do whatever we're doing.

Although writing this is bittersweet since we had to say goodbye to our older pup just a few weeks ago, I'm also thankful for the way she filled our lives with so much love. She gave the best kisses, was an incredible big sister, and taught us unimaginable patience.

Our other little one is a ball of never-ending energy. She is ready to go the second she hears keys jingle and loves chasing the squirrel friends that stare her down through the back window. She outruns all the other dogs in the park, makes sure everyone is well herded on hikes, and shakes with excitement whenever we're in the drive-thru for a pup cup. I can't imagine a life without dogs who bring so much chaos, fun, and love.



Angel — I finally completed a lifelong dream of having a puppy. After wanting either a German Shepherd or a Husky, I can now say I have both since my new puppy is a mix of the two. Her name is Miel, which means "honey" in Spanish. When she was born, we thought she looked like a little honey bear, so the name stuck — even though we later learned honey bears aren't real.

Miel is one of the kindest dogs and, surprisingly, very calm. She loves sitting in public places and soaking up all the attention she gets with her two different-colored eyes (one brown, one blue) and her beautiful black coat with warm brown tones. Even more surprising? She doesn't shed at all (yet).

At first, she was the runt of her litter, but after some good feeding from McKenzie Feed, she's now the largest of them all and she still hasn't stopped growing... I hope she stops soon though.

Cassie — Jade and Vada are my two rescue pups who bring endless love and balance to my life. Jade, now seven years old, has been my steady companion for years, keeping me grounded and reminding me to slow down and appreciate the little things. Vada, just one, has added a burst of energy and joy to our once-quiet routine with her bubbly, playful personality.

They remind me daily of what truly matters: being present, finding happiness in simple moments, and getting outside to enjoy the world around us. Whether we're out for a walk, exploring a new trail, or just sharing a quiet moment at home, they always manage to lift my spirits. I couldn't imagine life without my two forever friends.



Shondra — For nine months during the pandemic, while waiting for our house to be completed, I was living and working from my RV. With my husband gone most of the time, I felt increasingly isolated, but Benny and Ricky were my constant companions. Their steady presence turned long, quiet stretches into moments of joy and laughter. Benny's sweet nature reminded me to appreciate small comforts, while Ricky's endless energy got me outside and moving.

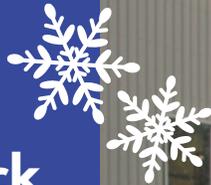
Together, they gave structure to uncertainty and warmth to solitude. Their unconditional love lifted my mood and reminded me how powerful a simple connection can be — whether it's a shared walk, wagging tails, or the quiet comfort of not being alone. For me, their companionship wasn't just comforting — it was healing.

Sometimes a different perspective
is all that is needed.



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Chart Notes

“Riding has really become an exercise in listening, communicating, and staying genuinely curious and in the moment... It allows me to decompress from a long day... I think that outside activities complete us and allow us to be more of a whole, real person... The horses keep me happy, and when I’m happy, I am a better doctor.”

– DR. MONICA ZILKOSKI
ON HOW RIDING KEEPS HER GROUNDED. SEE MEMBER PROFILE ON PAGE 12.

2026 LCMS Annual Meeting Feat. Gov. Kitzhaber Jan. 29th



Join us for the 2026 LCMS Annual Meeting on Thursday, January 29, from 5:30–8:00 PM at the Ford Alumni Center. We’re excited to welcome Governor John Kitzhaber as our special guest. As a physician, he will share insights on how physicians can use their collective voice, highlight key upcoming health-related legislation, and offer creative, practical ways to connect with legislators. Enjoy time with colleagues as we introduce the 2026 Board of Trustees and kick off the new year. Tickets are \$20. Scan the QR code to register. *Registration is required.*



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UPCOMING

Join the Women Physicians Group for a warm and festive holiday party on Tuesday, December 9th, from 6:00–8:00 PM at J. Scott Cellars. Enjoy a cozy evening to connect, unwind, and celebrate the season together.

LCMS is hosting its third biennial fundraising gala benefiting the LCMS Foundation on Saturday, May 2nd, 2026. You won’t want to miss this! Contact us today for donations or sponsorship opportunities.

Stay in the loop! Subscribe to get the latest LCMS event updates and community news.



Furry Therapy in a Physician's Life

BY KELSEY PETERS, DO

FOR LANE COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY

I grew up surrounded by animals — cats, dogs, tortoises, even goats. We once had a baby goat named Elizabeth, and I would feed her with a baby bottle. Today, my family is my fiancé and our animals. We call our home “the zoo.” Whenever we travel and ask friends to pet-sit, we jokingly say we’re looking for a zookeeper for the weekend.



Meet the Zoo

Harley is an 11-year-old shepherd mix. I adopted Harley a few months before starting school, and she’s been with me through everything — medical school in Texas, residency in Michigan, and now life in Oregon.

Louie (“Very Good Boy”) is a six-year-old German shepherd. I adopted Louie during a difficult part of my residency. Sometimes the best way out of a dark place is by helping someone else — for me, that “someone” was an abandoned dog named Louie. He gave me purpose and someone to take care of. Little did he know, he was taking care of me.

Dwight is a nearly one-year-old gray tabby kitten. On Christmas Eve, my fiancé found a couple of abandoned kittens on the side of the road, maybe four weeks old. He managed to scoop up the slowest one — we got the weakest link — yay for us! We initially thought Dwight was a girl, until our vet found “two tiny testicles,” so Amelia became

Dwight. He’s a total rascal — think Dwight Schrute shenanigans.

Lola is my fiancé’s 11-year-old cat. She absolutely runs the house. My dogs are terrified of her and instantly remember their place when she is nearby.

Why Pets Are My Daily Reset

In medicine, we often talk about burnout. When I’ve had long days in the OR or on-call, spending time with my dogs and cats makes for a peaceful reboot. I’ve made it a necessary part of my day to pet my animals for at least ten minutes.

Surgery is fast-paced, precise, and highly controlled. My dogs slow the world down, and caring for them reminds me that connection isn’t about fixing — it’s about being present with the simple things in life. Their worlds light up when we get ready to go for a walk, and I will always be impressed by how excited they get about eating the same brown kernels for dinner every night. Like the quote from *Marley & Me*, “A dog doesn’t care if you’re rich or poor, educated or illiterate, clever, or dull. Give him your heart and he will give you his.”



Pets as Medicine

My badge reel is a German shepherd, and I often wear scrub caps with cats or dogs on them. Patients notice immediately, and suddenly, we’re bonding over pet stories. Their faces light up when they show me photos. For many patients, their pets are a huge motivator during recovery. And for those dealing with stress, anxiety, or depression, pets have this incredible ability to bring us back to center.



For me, it’s medicine in its most natural form. Plus, dog walks — well, more like the dogs walking me — keep me up and moving. They give me structure, and consistency is one of the most important things for long-term wellness.

A Simple Reminder: Be Present

Our pets are quiet teachers — they show us how to live in the moment, love without condition, and find joy in the simple things. They remind us that wellness isn’t about doing more, but instead about being more present; they’re fully here in the now.

They also teach us unconditional love. No matter how long the day is, they greet you with the same enthusiasm. That kind of steady, judgment-free connection is something we could all use more of. You can’t pour from an empty cup, and pets have a way of reminding us to rest, play, and reconnect — the basics of wellness that we often forget.

Pets also remind us to appreciate the finer things in life — a good meal, being around our people, enjoying the outdoors, and, when all else fails, a good nap. Relaxing and being a little lazy can be surprisingly hard in a world that’s constantly go, go, go!

For many of us, relaxing is a real challenge when our to-do lists never seem to end — and when we don’t pause, burnout can take over quickly. I’m lucky to have four animals who remind me to pause, and who fill my heart.◆

Photos provided by Dr. Kelsey Peters



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The Purrfect Friend

BY SAM SPAYDE

EUGENE SPRINGFIELD CAT LOUNGE

Pet ownership can play a meaningful role in improving our physical and psychological health. From boosting cardiovascular health to alleviating loneliness, pets have been shown to support overall well-being. The companionship of a pet is something that many of us treasure, but did you know that animal companionship can do so much more than simply brighten our day?

For example, one of the most frequently cited advantages of owning a dog is increased physical activity. The team at the Mayo Clinic noted that dog owners are more likely to follow regular walks and other routines that support healthy blood sugar levels, helping strengthen heart muscle efficiency and reduce cardiac strain.¹

A meta-analysis cited by the American Heart Association found that dog ownership was associated with a 24% reduction in all-cause mortality.² A systematic review published in the journal *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience* found that pet ownership correlated with better cognitive health, slower brain aging, and larger brain structures among older adults.³

Overall, the benefits appear to be substantive: owners of companion animals show lower resting heart rates, reduced blood pressure, and lowered risk of death from cardiovascular disease.

After 30 years of practicing Internal Medicine, one of our Lane County physicians, Dr. Michelle Wyatt, opened a different kind of small business. After retiring near the end of the COVID pandemic, Dr. Wyatt got the idea to open Eugene Springfield Cat Lounge

as a place for cats to be adopted and for people to start going out again. It's an opportunity for socializing with friends while visiting cats in a public space.

"From 2012-2018, when I had a solo practice, I had an office dog that people found very therapeutic — so many patients mentioned it made going to the doctor less stressful. I personally have experienced the benefits of having pet cats and dogs, particularly in helping with depression. My pets give me a reason to get up in the morning. So many of my patients of all ages find that their pets also give them meaning and purpose," she says.



Harpurr and Pipurr, cozied up like they invented cuddling.

"It is a great place for people who want to go out by themselves, for students who miss their cats, and for people who can't have cats in their homes. Our tagline for the Cat Lounge is 'The purrfect place to relax, slow down, and connect.' And so many people are craving a connection that is missing in their daily lives, especially with our increasing use of technology nowadays."

Beyond the physical, pets can significantly impact emotional and

social well-being. The Mayo Clinic highlights that pets help reduce loneliness, give purpose via routine care, and can improve overall mood.⁴ Two other Lane County physicians, Dr. Ken McClain and Dr. Maria Bolanos-McClain acknowledge the benefits of pet ownership on health.

"I've experienced the benefits of companion pets in my own life and in my patients' lives," says Dr. McClain.

At the University of Oregon Student Health Center, he sees many students who experience increasing anxiety or depression in the absence of their pet at home. Dr. Bolanos-McClain adds, "Older adults who may be homebound or have few visitors find relief from loneliness with the companionship of a cat or dog."

In sum, owning a pet can be much more than a joyful experience — it can also promote better heart health, longevity, improved cognitive functioning, and richer social connections. As science evolves, one thing remains clear: the bonds we form with our animal companions can play a genuine role in our well-being. ♦



The cat cave on the table? That's Kenji, with Dr. Michelle Wyatt pictured.

Photos by Dr. Michelle Wyatt & Sam Spayde

1. "How Owning Pets Can Lead to a Healthier Lifestyle," Mayo Clinic News Network, [newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org/news-network)
 2. "The Health Benefits of Owning Pets," Harvard Magazine, [harvardmagazine.com](https://www.harvardmagazine.com)
 3. "Pet Ownership and Cognitive Health," *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience*, [frontiersin.org](https://www.frontiersin.org)
 4. "Benefits of Having a Pet," Mayo Clinic Press, [mcpres.mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org)

Healing & Horses

Dr. Monica Zilkoski's return to riding brings healing, balance, and a renewed sense of connection in the horse arena.

BY STEVIE DAVISSON

FOR LANE COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY

Dr. Monica Zilkoski's love for animals is unmistakable. While Zilkoski's family includes two dogs, Charlie and Moxie, and an orange tabby cat named George, her two largest companions are Gala Dancer and Tulip, her beloved Dutch Warmblood horses. For Zilkoski, time spent with these majestic animals brings unmatched peace. "Every day that I get to ride my horse is a super day," she shares. Training and competing in dressage with Gala Dancer helps her maintain a healthy work-life balance. "You don't know what tomorrow will bring. I am grateful for every single day that I get to ride."

Zilkoski's medical career began as a nurse, completing her BSN at Oregon Health & Sciences University. She spent four years in diverse settings — from the psych ward at the VA hospital to the ortho-trauma floor at OHSU. A personal experience during nursing school — a foot surgery complication — changed her trajectory and sparked her interest in orthopedic surgery. "That personal experience with a complication piqued my interest in the foot and ankle specifically," she recalls. "Now that I'm an orthopedic foot and ankle surgeon, I understand how that complication occurred. Having been a patient, I have a lot of empathy for the patient experience."



Slocum

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Dr. Monica Zilkoski outside Slocum Center for Orthopedics, where she performs foot and ankle surgery for patients across Lane County.

Photos provided by Angel Montes

Shaped by Animals and Medicine

Inspired by her work on the orthopedic and trauma floor at OHSU and with the encouragement of a mentor, Zilkoski decided to pursue medical school. “I realized that, eventually, I would be 40, and if I didn’t try to go to medical school and achieve my dream, then I would still be 40,” she laughs.

She was accepted to OHSU for medical school, completed orthopedic residency at the Medical University of South Carolina, and finished her foot and ankle fellowship at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle in 2011. Soon after, she joined Hope Orthopedics in Salem.

“One of the factors that influenced my selection of Hope Orthopedics was meeting with a real estate agent. She took me on a tour around the Salem area, and there was a horse farm,” Zilkoski remembers. “That got me thinking – now that I’ve finished all my schooling and training, perhaps I can finally have horses again!”

Horses have been a lifelong passion for Zilkoski, connecting her to family and childhood memories. “My grandpa had a horse that I rode in third grade,” she reminisces. “Then in fourth grade, I got my first pony. And he was just like most ponies—not very nice. Ponies have a reputation for being stinkers, and I got bucked off a few times!” she laughs. She later owned an Appaloosa and several quarter horses, but sold her horse in high school to focus on her studies, beginning a decades-long hiatus from riding.

Returning to the Saddle

As a chief resident, Zilkoski had the chance to ride again when an acquaintance needed help exercising a horse while recovering from

surgery. “The moment I sat on a horse again after more than 20 years, I just thought, yeah... this is where I belong, in the saddle,” she says. That horse was trained in dressage — a sport new to Zilkoski, but always intriguing. After she moved back to Salem, a visit to a tack shop led her to a dressage instructor and a horse available right away. “And so that, of course, sealed my fate,” she says.

“Dressage by definition is essentially the gymnasticizing of the horse,” Zilkoski explains. In competition, horse and rider perform memorized, precise movements with minimal cues, creating the effect of the horse dancing to music. “You’re doing a variety of movements that show the horse’s training. Snoop Dogg called it ‘fancy prancing’ or ‘crip walking,’” she laughs, referencing the viral clip from the 2020 Olympics.

When asked what dressage and riding mean to her, Zilkoski quotes equestrian sports psychologist Pernilla Nathan, PhD: “If you thought riding horses wasn’t going to be emotional, you probably haven’t had your soul handed back to you by a 1,200-pound mirror yet. It’s radical vulnerability on four legs and being humbled, but doing it anyway because it’s the most alive I’ve ever felt.” Horses, she says, are emotionally intelligent and react to feelings we may not even realize we’re experiencing.

Back Home

Since May 2022, Zilkoski has worked part-time at Slocum Orthopedics in Eugene. Having grown up in the Eugene-Springfield area and graduating from the University of Oregon, she feels like she’s at home again. Her mother lives in the area, and so she has an excuse to visit her often. Zilkoski still lives in Salem, allowing her to be near her horses and dedicate more

time to training and riding.

“Riding has really become an exercise in listening, communicating, and staying genuinely curious and in the moment,” she says — qualities that benefit her medical practice as well. “Gala Dancer gives me lots of feedback that I should be paying attention to the here and now and that communication styles can vary. So it’s important to be able to say things or ask things in different ways so that patients understand, or the horse understands.”

Community, Connection, & Respite

Due to traveling for work, Zilkoski hasn’t had many opportunities to attend LCMS events, but is interested in the more theatrical experiences like the sneak peek of *Dracula* at the Hult Center in partnership with the Eugene Ballet

Though her work keeps her busy, Zilkoski finds community through horse riding. “I have a really amazing group of women that I ride with, and that connection for me is really important,” she says. “My biggest source of friendship has been through the horses, people that I’ve met through riding.”

For Zilkoski, avoiding burnout and maintaining her passion for riding go hand in hand. “It allows me to decompress from a long day — to me, the horses are more like a respite,” she says. She encourages other physicians to find fulfillment outside the workplace.

“I think that outside activities complete us and allow us to be more of a whole, real person with our patients.” By nurturing her relationship with her horses, both Zilkoski and her patients benefit. She presents it simply by saying, “The horses keep me happy, and when I’m happy, I am a better doctor.”◆



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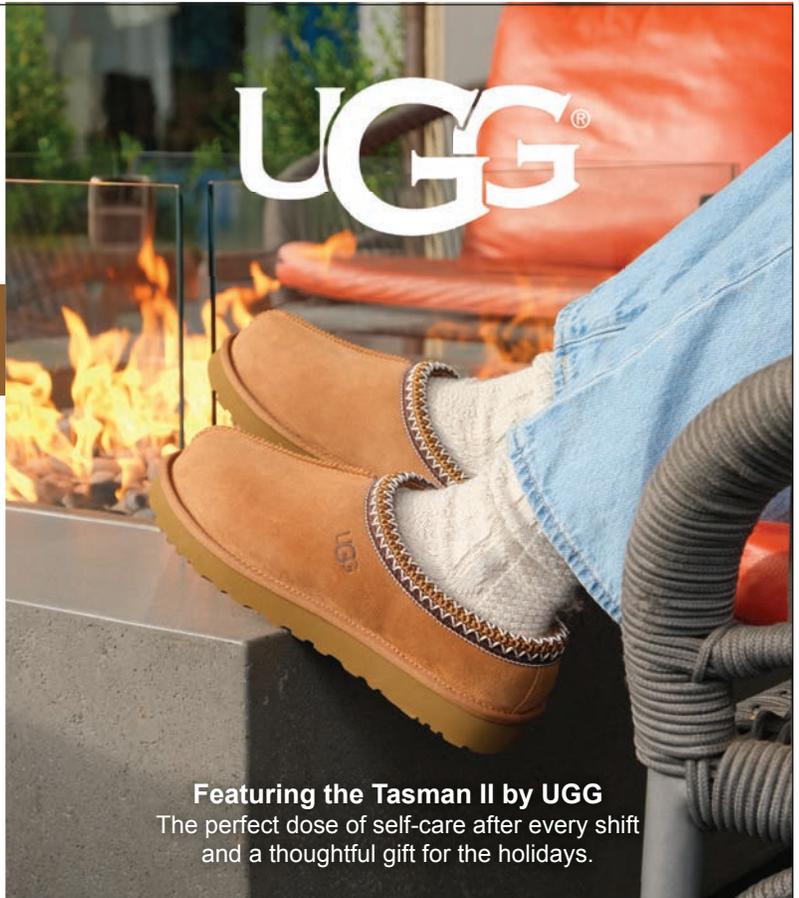


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Serenity Sam, the Comfort Dog

BY SERENITY LANE

FOR LANE COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY

Nearly a year ago, a fluffy goldendoodle named Serenity Sam celebrated his first birthday in the halls of Serenity Lane, an addiction treatment center serving our state. Though he was new to the team, it didn't take long before patients were lining up to take photos with him. With a gentle nudge and a wag of his tail, Sam easily hops onto the couch — trained, of course — and settles in beside those seeking a moment of warmth and comfort.



Sam is a certified comfort animal provided by Working Dogs Oregon, a local nonprofit that trains and donates comfort and K9 service dogs to community organizations and police departments. To date, the organization has placed 26 dogs in facilities across the region, including several within substance use disorder (SUD) treatment programs.

Sam is more than a local celebrity — he's a member of the care team. Between sessions, he's often found bounding down hallways, playing fetch in the lecture hall, or basking

in the attention of patients who volunteer to walk or bathe him. His cheerful presence lightens the emotional load of early recovery and reminds many clients that joy is still possible.

Yet Sam's impact extends far beyond simple stress relief. He's trained to respond to emotional distress and offer immediate, grounded support. One well-known story among staff describes Sam walking with a team member when he suddenly turned toward a patient quietly struggling at the end of a hallway. Without hesitation, Sam approached, pressing close and alerting staff to the patient's emotional state — an intuitive act of compassion that has become his hallmark.

Leaving pets behind is a major barrier for many individuals seeking addiction treatment. For some, their animals are the only consistent source of love they've known.

"Knowing there's a furry friend waiting here for them can make all the difference," says Abby Schmidt, Alumni Services Specialist and one of Sam's caregivers. "Sometimes it's what gets them to come through our doors, and sometimes it's what helps them stay when treatment gets hard."

Darrin Campbell, Executive Director of Working Dogs Oregon, explains, "Our goal with treatment center dogs is simple: give patients a reason to stay when they're looking for reasons to leave."¹

A 2021 review from the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work suggests that Animal-Assisted Interventions (AAIs) can meaningfully enhance client engagement in treatment.² Serenity Lane staff regularly reports that patients find it easier to share vulnerable emotions in group therapy when

Sam is present, describing him as a "safe and comforting presence."

Sam's benefits extend to staff as well. Professionals working in substance use disorder treatment have turnover rates nearly three times the national average, with only about 60% remaining in the field long-term.³ Having Sam stationed near counselors' offices provides an unexpected, but welcome therapeutic outlet.

"Serenity Sam is a love and happiness magnet," says Lisa Steele, PhD, Chief Operating Officer at Serenity Lane. "Walking through campus, I see staff and patients alike stop mid-sentence to pet Sam. You can see the stress melt off their faces, replaced by smiles. He's pure, organic medicine — and a great addition to the Serenity Lane family."

Indeed, Sam is family. He appears in staff photos, joins weekend playdates with staff members' pets, and serves as a bridge across departments — fostering connection, empathy, and shared joy.

As those in recovery often say, the opposite of addiction isn't sobriety — it's connection. And through every nuzzle, paw, and tail wag, Sam embodies that truth. ♦



From left to right: Serenity Sam smiling for the camera; Serenity Sam dressed as Santa Claus.

Photos provided by Suzanne Graf

1. "The Story of Recovery," Working Dogs Oregon, Facebook, facebook.com/workingdogsoregon/posts/2025-07-29

2. "Improving Engagement in Behavioral and Mental Health Services Through Animal-Assisted Interventions," Psychiatric Services, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10.1176/appi.ps.202000989

3. "How Serious of a Problem Is Staff Turnover in Substance Abuse Treatment? A Longitudinal Study of...," Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20667612

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Can “Puppy Breaks” Help Bark Away Physician Stress?

BY TANYA ALBERT HENRY

CONTRIBUTING NEWS WRITER, AMA

Dogs and other pets have comforted patients in hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes for years. Could these animals also be a good stress-management technique for doctors, nurses, and other health professionals caring for those patients?

Preliminary results from one hospital that’s tried it indicate the answer is yes.

Once a month, physicians, nurses and others on staff at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago and at Rush’s suburban Oak Park campus have a chance to get away from the hustle and bustle of treating patients and spend some time petting therapy dogs.

Paws that Refresh

It’s part of a program called Pet Pause that aims to reduce stress and promote well-being in the high-pressure work environment.

Nursing leadership runs the program, and in 2016, they began studying the impact it was having on staff members who participated. When a staff member agreed to participate in the study, they had their blood pressure measured and then self-reported stress levels on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the highest level of stress. Those two measures are collected again after staff members finish petting the dogs and head back to work.

“The study wrapped up in September and researchers are crunching the final results from the nearly 700 participants at the two sites, but a preliminary look at data from the first ten months of the program shows that the dogs are having a positive impact,” says Mary

Heitschmidt, PhD, APRN, CCRN, principal investigator of the study. Heitschmidt is the director of clinical research, co-director of the Center for Clinical Research and Scholarship, and assistant professor at Rush.

For example, coming into the room to pet the dogs, participants on average say they had a stress level of 4.75 on that one-to-ten scale. After petting the dogs, the physicians, nurses and others who participated in the Pet Pause study reported a stress level that averaged 3.25.

“People like it,” Heitschmidt says of the program. “It’s a good break and it increases morale.”

“Pet therapy became a simple, powerful way to support doctors and nurses on the front lines.”

How to Replicate the Program

Putting together the Pet Pause Program hasn’t required much monetary investment, but it has required a lot of teamwork between the hospitals, nursing students, and the therapy-dog owners to bring the pieces together.

Nurses reach out to volunteers to bring in the therapy dogs from places such as Chicago-based Canine Therapy Corp. and the Anti-Cruelty Society of Chicago. Dogs range in size and breed and include a Westie, Labradoodles, Goldendoodles and a German

Shepherd mix. Those leading the initiative also must reserve space in the hospitals to bring the animals and hospital staff together. Advertising and marketing the program is a big piece of it as well, Heitschmidt says.

“It’s not hard. It’s just time- and labor-intensive to get it going,” she says. “Once it’s going, it is easy to keep it going.”

One of Many Stress-Reduction Efforts

With physician and nurse burnout a big concern in health care, animal therapy is one of a number of stress-reduction efforts at Rush. In addition to the dogs, miniature horses came in one time too.

Rush is considering the addition of music and art therapy for the staff and there are mindfulness classes staff members can take. Among other initiatives, the oncology ambulatory area at the Chicago site has a stress-relief room that includes a massage chair, music, water and even chocolate.

“You swipe your card for access and it’s a place where anyone can go to take a time out,” Heitschmidt says. She says the nurses who led this initiative are taking an evidence-based look at the project and results indicate that it is having a positive impact on staff. Another area of the medical center is now converting a closet to serve as a similar place to recharge.

“There is a whole initiative around stress and burnout,” Heitschmidt says. “We’re focusing on people on the front lines — doctors, nurses — and helping them in any way we can...” ♦

Adapted from American Medical Association. Full article at ama-assn.org.

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Behind the Curtain: Medicine Meets Art

BY MICHELLE FERGUSON
MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTOR, EUGENE BALLET



Earlier this fall, Lane County Medical Society and Eugene Ballet partnered for a special evening at the Hult Center. It was a wonderful opportunity to experience a moment of art, community, and connection.

More than fifty LCMS members and guests attended the social gathering, where they were treated to a reception and a sneak peek at an excerpt of

Dracula, Eugene Ballet's newest full-length work choreographed by Associate Artistic Director and Resident Choreographer Suzanne Haag.

This preview also offered a close look at what it means to create a world premiere here in Eugene. *Dracula* was created locally, from choreography and costume construction to set fabrication and lighting design. The result was a visually striking and highly engaging production that highlights the remarkable talent and artistic excellence that thrives in our community.

The production also provided employment opportunities for craftspeople and production staff residing in our region. More than 80% of the project's expenses were spent in Lane County, directly contributing to our local creative economy. As the season turns toward winter and celebrations of togetherness, we

hold deep appreciation for the many ways our medical community cares for the health of our region.

The arts and healthcare share a meaningful common purpose: supporting the well-being of individuals. We are grateful to the LCMS community for fostering opportunities that nourish connections beyond the workplace.

Looking ahead, we hope to welcome LCMS members, families, and patients to Eugene Ballet's holiday tradition, *The Nutcracker*, at the Hult Center, December 19–24. With Tchaikovsky's iconic score performed live by Orchestra Next and a cast of professional dancers and local young performers, *The Nutcracker* remains a festive seasonal celebration for audiences of all ages.

Thank you for all you do for our community and for taking the time to come together in support of the arts this season. ♦

Photo by Angel Montes

The Nutcracker presented by slocum



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10 Coburg Rd Ste 100
Eugene, 97401
P: 541-868-9700
F: 541-868-9844

Amber Vester, DO

Family Medicine &
Osteopathic Manipulative
Medicine
PeaceHealth Urgent Care
1200 Hilyard St
Eugene, 97401
P: 458-205-6282

Notes

Last chance to secure advertising specials for 2026! Reach out for renewal details and rates on next year's magazine and Directory ads.

LCMS Events

The 2026 LCMS Annual Meeting will take place on Thursday, January 29th from 5:30–8:00 PM at the Ford Alumni Center.

We're excited to welcome Governor John Kitzhaber for an evening exploring how physicians can leverage their collective voice and use key legislative tools to advance healthcare accessibility. We'll also introduce the 2026 Board of Trustees and connect with colleagues.

Community

"If Not Now, When?" is a free community conversation on Oregon's healthcare landscape, Friday, December 5th, from 12:00–1:15 PM at the WOW Hall. The panel features Dr. Antonio Germann, Dr. Nick Jones, and Hayden Rooke-Ley, J.D., who will explore current legislative reforms, the rise of Direct Primary Care, and momentum behind the Universal Health Plan. All are welcome to attend.



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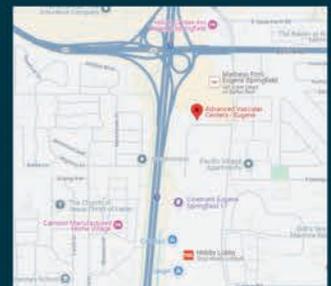
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