Sheila Levie, VMD  
NJVMA Secretary/Treasurer

**Number of years as a Veterinarian:** 28 years, all in general practice

**Why/how did you decide to become a Veterinarian?**
I have always loved solving puzzles and solving tricky problems, as well as really liking animals. I considered going into research initially but realized that I actually like variety and a certain amount of human contact. General practice was a natural fit for this since there were fewer episodes of sheer adrenaline rush and more chances of working methodically on problems or using creativity to come up with weird solutions or figure out odd presentations or owner descriptions. I do like the chance to vary up healthy management with sick cases, and I never really know what might be coming through the door today. The other reason for general practice was that if my husband got transferred elsewhere in the country, I could likely find a job there.

**Why did you volunteer to serve on the NJVMA Executive Board?**
I wanted a chance to see and contribute to the behind-the-scenes work in our state to identify and try to address issues affecting the profession, ideally before they get politicized or get misinformation swirling. Most of the leaders that I had seen in the position seemed to be practice owners or specialists, and I felt that could add the perspective of a long-term associate veterinarian trying to balance job and family while working in the trenches. Many of the issues are similar, but there are concerns faced by associates that longer-term owners might not remember or have not faced recently.

**What do you feel is your greatest professional/personal accomplishment to date?**
This isn’t flashy or impressive, but I have managed to surf the wave of multiple burnout risk periods, changes in client expectations over the years (and the rise of social media), and raise my children to be productive, independent adults. I have survived. That’s not so bad.

**How do you balance your work/volunteer/home commitments?**
I still don’t balance them well. If anyone has good ideas, I am always open to suggestions! I have spent most of my career trying to set boundaries and compartmentalize these things, but work and related things always seem to creep into taking a larger slice of time than I wanted. Lists and plans help somewhat, but husband, friends, and carpools were necessary when the kids were younger - it took a very large village to keep the juggling going. As the kids got older, I was finally able to add some volunteer activities and personal activities to keep me happy.

I do think that one of the secrets to saving sanity and avoiding stagnation is to add something new - a skill, hobby, or whatever - every few years. My personal rule is to make sure that I expand my repertoire with something more major at least every 5ish years. (New surgical procedure, adding in-house cytology, bumping up ultrasound skills, improving dentistry, etc.). These ideas could come from discussions with colleagues/friends, hearing something in CE, or noticing a hole in what I can do in daily life.

**When was the last time you did something for the first time?**
I decided to learn canoeing five years ago, and this year, I took classes in whitewater canoeing. It was definitely a step (jump?) outside my comfort zone, but there is an amazing sense of accomplishment every time I finish a run with a good line and without “swimming.” It has absolutely nothing to do with veterinary medicine,
involves spending several hours outside in a natural setting, involves physical and mental effort, and allows me to go home to a comfortable sofa and indoor plumbing at night. What’s not to like?