

AAV Member Spotlight: Melody Hennigh, RVT, KPA CTP

What was the first bird job you ever had?

My first job working exclusively with birds was in 2008 when I started working at the Medical Center for Birds in Oakley, CA. Prior to working here I would try to get as much bird experience as possible while in tech school by signing up for rotations at hospitals that specialize in avian healthcare. This eventually led me to the Medical Center for Birds!

Most memorable AAV experience or contribution

In 2013, I was a co-instructor to Dr. Susan Brown, DVM, along with Julie Murad, Allen Roberts, and Shauna Roberts, for a lab at AAV, titled "Low stress Avian Handling Methods and Basic Behavior Change Strategies." I love being a part of these kind of labs because we review the science and importance of low-stress care and training in the veterinary field and then participants get to practice these principles in small groups with experienced birds helping them learn. After the lab a few veterinarians came up to me who were on cloud 9 that they were able to teach their lab parrot how to drink water from a syringe! This year we are repeating the lab, titled "Low-Stress Avian Handling Techniques: Creating the Low-Stress Avian Vet," with updated material and videos and presenting it for AAV this year in Atlanta! It will be a great lab for vets, techs, and students to learn low-stress alternatives for avian healthcare that they will be able to use in the field daily. We hope to see you there!

What is your favorite avian species and why?

If I had to pick a favorite it would be the Yellow-Naped Amazon! I love their over-the-top body language, from the fanned out tail feathers and pinning eyes to the way they stomp around with their wings slightly apart from their body, they have such a fun and clear way of communicating! Working as a trainer, Yellow-Naped Amazons (and other Amazons) are among some of my most common clients for problems with "aggression" ex: biting and lunging. It is so fulfilling teaching parrot parents how to read the body language, learn alternative behaviors, and enjoy their relationship with their bird.

Best benefits of AAV membership?

For fellow technicians, the benefits of an AAV membership include discounts to the conference, and access to all previous proceedings, including some presentations recorded live, which is a wealth of information. Being a member of AAV also provides tons of networking opportunities. In addition, there is a section on the AAV website that is dedicated specifically to Q&A for technicians, check it out!



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