

One Love, One Heart, One Health...the students' story

Briana Schwapp and Roxann Hayles

Surgeons, cardiologists, microbiologists, obstetricians, anesthesiologists, dentists, nutritionists, oncologists, pathologists, epidemiologists, research scientists, economists and the ability to treat more than one species; that's a Veterinarian's job in a nutshell. The returning five graduates from the UWI School of Veterinary Medicine will have to be ready to equip Jamaica with the practical and professional skills equivalent to that of 80 human medical professionals. This arduous, demanding and somewhat dangerous path requires immeasurable morality, intellectual ability and emotional strength. Every day, we are challenged mentally and physically; to risk being chased, bitten and kicked, to study, to learn, to memorize, to inject, X-ray, examine, failing at times - and every day, we are driven by our commitment to the welfare and health of animals and an unwavering love for humanity to do it over and over again.



Our lives, especially in a developing country are so closely intertwined with those of animals that it will be a privilege to gain professionals dedicated to easing the suffering, promoting welfare and maximizing potential economic value of the animals to the country. And like Mohammed Gandhi once said, "you can judge a nation by the way it treats its animals". Most of the students currently in Trinidad studying without a doubt are passionate about animal health and welfare which arose in a similar fashion to what had happened to Tashay Graham a 2nd year student who recalled her drive to become a veterinarian rose from the loss of a beloved pet

and a feeling of helplessness and grief which is when she decided to equip herself with the necessary knowledge to save the lives of others.

Roxann Hayles, VSATT President and a 3rd year student spoke about growing up in a community where it was okay for animals to be abused, and person's inability to realize that these animals do feel pain, hunger, neglect and other emotions. Gavin Hall a 2nd year student even though he lost his pet dog his goal is to, "focus my future practice on equine medicine. There are a small number of equine vets in Jamaica and I want my experiences at home and abroad to allow me to improve equine medicine in Jamaica".



Briana Schwapp a 1st year student's desire was solidified upon volunteering with a foal in the animal hospital at the Vet School. "When I first walked into the stable housing the filly and mare, owned by a client of the vet school, in spite of my dedication and love for animals my first thought was 'all this for a foal?' I'd seen it for kittens and puppies, dogs and cats and other small animals at the clinic that I volunteer at, all this for the

'important,' more popular animals, but never for a large one. It blew my mind that this was the norm, that this was the world I would have the privilege of working in. With people who skip sleep, food and fun to care for an animal". A combination of the desire to ease animal suffering and be a qualified, medical advocate for animals in all the ways that they serve us has led to a group of dedicated veterinary students currently eating, sleeping and breathing veterinary medicine for five years.

We believe Veterinarians are also a vital scientific and economic backbone to society by providing an essential link between human and animal medicine. In the recent years, the major diseases affecting the human population has been linked to animals, Ebola, Swine flu, chikungunya and zika virus are just a few. The involvement of Veterinarians especially with the advent of ONE HEALTH will help in fighting these zoonotic diseases before they have the chance to even impact the human population. Shakera Hemmings a 4th year student recalled human medicine was her passion but then the veterinary part followed suit.



The aim at the end of the day is to improve Jamaica in terms of animal and human health through all we have learnt in the 5 years spent in Trinidad from creating a Pro-Spay and Neuter

Campaign (public health significance) to securing the future of the equine industry and in maximizing the agricultural industry through animal health.



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