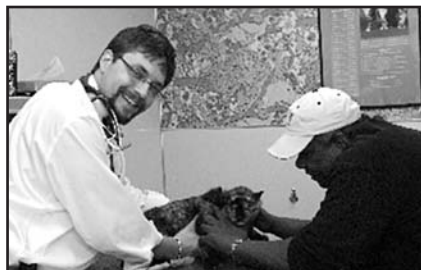


Alumni Voices: ‘Every Family Member Deserves a Great Hospital’



Every client at Rockland Veterinary receives special loving care from Christopher Puzio and staff.

You might say he is one of those rare “super-achievers.”

He owns and operates Rockland Veterinary, three thriving veterinary hospitals in New York State’s Rockland County; he has launched a new website and

is carving out time to create its content; he has developed a staff dedicated to both good medicine and excellent customer service; and he finds time to be an actively involved dad with his young son Noah.

He is Christopher Puzio, DVM, a 1992 graduate in animal science at Rutgers and the newest member of the “Community of 50 for Equine Excellence.”

Christopher grew up in Rutherford, NJ – not exactly the bucolic location one would expect an animal sciences major to come from. But even as a boy, he knew he wanted to be a veterinarian. So he set his sights on the Department of Animal Sciences at Rutgers’ School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (which was known as Cook College during Christopher’s undergraduate days).

Even as an undergraduate he was an over-achiever: president of Student Advisors, an officer in the Veterinary Science Club, and a member of Cook Student Council and Alpha Zeta service and honor society. All of this and getting up to report to the dairy barn by 6 a.m. to mix silage and feed cows for professor James Wohlt and feeding the sheep, goats and horses on College Farm Road on Sunday mornings.

“What I loved about my time on the Cook campus was working with the animals – which really motivated me to pursue my dream of veterinary medicine – and the one-on-one relationships with the faculty. They were very hands-on. People make the experience, and I think it helped that the Cook community is a small setting in a much larger university,” says Christopher.

He took classes with Karyn Malinowski, the Equine Science Center director, and with Wohlt, and was a George H. Cook Honors Student with professor Sarah Ralston. That last association provided an interesting twist when, after graduation from Rutgers, he went to the University of Missouri to pursue his veterinary degree.

One summer at Missouri he did a research project with V.K. Ganjam, a professor in the Department of Biomedical Sciences

in the veterinary school. Ganjam chose Christopher for the project, saying “if you’re good enough to work in Dr. Ralston’s lab, you’re good enough for me.” Later, Ganjam persuaded him to go for a master’s degree in addition to his veterinary degree, and so Christopher also holds a master’s degree in veterinary pathology.

And it was at Missouri that he met his future wife Bridget, also a veterinary student, and together they opened a clinic in Stony Point, NY. Now Christopher rotates his time at the North Rockland Animal Hospital in Stony Point; the Pomona Animal Hospital in Pomona, NY; and the Hudson Valley Animal Hospital in Valley Cottage, NY.

All three practices specialize in small animals and exotics and operate under the mantra, “Every family member deserves a great hospital.”

Says Christopher, “The business started out as a three-doctor practice and now it serves the communities with seven doctors and 40 staff. We brought sophisticated models from the human world to veterinary practice, emphasizing very good medicine and – and this is a phrase not usually associated with medicine – great customer service.”

Christopher says he is able to encourage excellent customer service through a highly motivated and empowered staff. If you sit in one of his offices for a few minutes and listen to staff/client conversations, you get the sense that the employees are caring, very knowledgeable and promote client loyalty.

Loyalty is also apparent in Christopher’s philosophy; hence his pledge to become a member of the “Community of 50 for Equine Excellence” – a program designed to engage high-level contributors to support the permanent endowment of the Equine Science Center.

Even though Christopher’s practice does not involve equine animals, he says he is truly grateful for his experience with the faculty at Rutgers and the fact that when he was an undergraduate they always made him feel like a part of the family – encouraging him, forgiving mistakes, and celebrating triumphs. “After every school break, they always made you feel like you were coming home,” he recalls.



Christopher Puzio, on vacation with son Noah, and some feathered friends.

“I always wanted to be a vet to take care of people’s pets and work with people. It’s about promoting the human-animal bond,” he says.