

# WELL-BEING

## Wellness & Well-being

### THE FOREFRONT & FUTURE OF THE FVMA'S GOALS

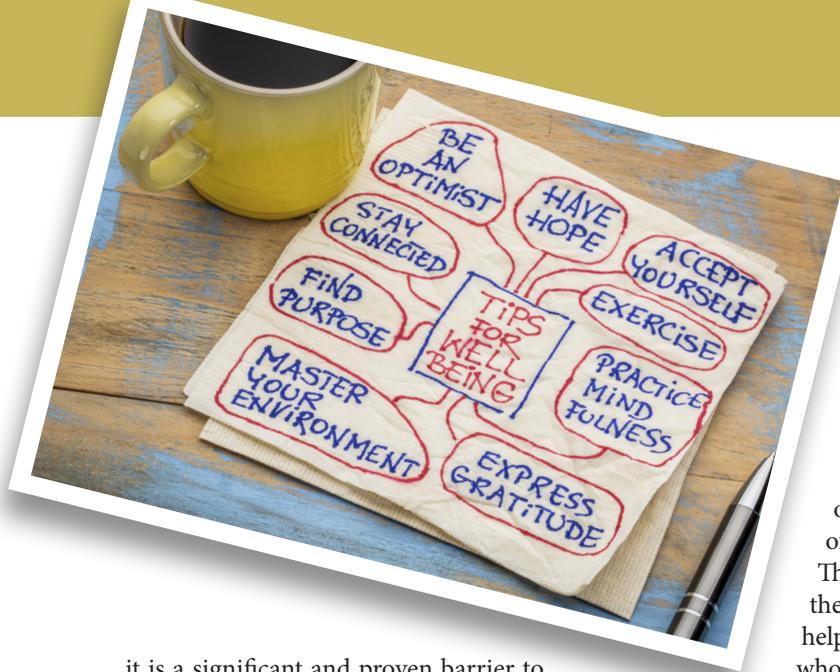
*Philip Richmond, DVM, CHC-BCS, CCFP*

In May 2019, the FVMA's Executive Director Phil Hinkle and I discussed forming a committee to serve Florida's veterinary professionals' wellness and well-being needs and concerns. Soon after, Mr. Hinkle presented the idea to FVMA leadership. Later that summer, the FVMA Executive Board, led by then-FVMA President Dr. Marc Presnell, approved the formation of the FVMA Professional Wellness and Well-being Committee (PWWC). Our FVMA leadership, including current FVMA President Dr. Michael Epperson and President-elect Dr. Mary Smart, continue to give the committee strong support. This support has allowed us to complete several projects and goals.

Since its inception, I've had the privilege of serving as chair of the committee. Our committee members are Drs. Juan Samper, Dani McVety, Nanette Parratto-Wagner, Cherie Buisson, Kelly Brady and Jamie Stahl. The PWWC, FVMA leadership and FVMA staff have worked together since the committee's inception to offer the following for Florida's veterinary professionals:

- 1. FVMA website:** Content includes wellness and well-being topics, addiction resources, suicide prevention sites, mental health self-assessments, veterinary-specific mental health sites and various support groups. There's also a list of mental health professionals in major city centers (and some rural areas) who have extensive experience working with medical professionals in the areas of burnout and compassion/ethical fatigue.
- 2. Social media resources, *The Advocate* & online webinars:** The FVMA's Communications Department has put out meaningful and impactful content in the FVMA's bimonthly publication, *The Advocate*. Articles from members of the PWWC have been published in *The Advocate*, and we have provided information and resources for articles written by the FVMA Communications Department. We plan on offering webinars on wellness and well-being topics, which
- 3. Wellness tracks at conferences:** We bring nationally recognized speakers and educators in veterinary wellness and well-being to FVMA conferences. We have hosted an array of subject experts including: Dr. Elizabeth Strand, who is the founder of the veterinary social work program at University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine and co-researcher on the Merck Veterinary Wellbeing Study; Dr. Jen Brandt, who is the AVMA director of wellbeing and diversity initiative; Dr. Cherie Buisson, an FVMA PWWC member and founder of A Happy Vet; and Dr. Heidi Allespach, who is a psychologist from the University of Miami's Jackson Medical Center. At the upcoming 91<sup>st</sup> FVMA Annual Conference, there will be three mental health professionals presenting including: Dr. Alexis Polles, who is the medical director for Florida Professionals Resource Network; Dr. Bree Montana from the VIN Foundation; and Dr. Jamie Stahl, who is a mental health professional for the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine (UFCVM). We now also offer live QPR Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention Certification workshops at all FVMA conferences.
- 4. CE requirements:** Our committee has recently worked with Mr. Hinkle and the Florida Board of Veterinary Medicine to allow five hours of wellness and well-being CE. This does not add to the 30-hour requirement but allows for wellness courses to be used toward that total.
- 5. Mental health questions on Florida's veterinary licensing application:** On the veterinary licensing application, the Florida Board has changed and continues to change the mental illness licensing questions. This is a major win for our colleagues statewide. Chief Medical Officer for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Dr. Christine Moutier emphasized how the presence of questions on state licensing applications regarding mental illness, noting how

will be available to members in the near future.



it is a significant and proven barrier to seeking treatment. It was my pleasure to share our successful efforts with her. The PWWC's proposal to the Board — including relevant studies supporting the removal of mental health questions on licensing applications — may also be able to serve as a model to other states to petition and improve the likelihood of veterinarians seeking mental health treatment when needed.

6. **EAP and MAP:** Our committee is exploring the possibility of creating an employee assistance program or member assistance program. This would be an important, potential benefit of FVMA membership and allow members to quickly and efficiently access a mental health professional with just a phone call. I want to give a heartfelt thanks to Dr. Brooke Certa for putting a significant amount of her time and effort into this project.
7. **Coordination/Cooperation with AVMA Wellness and other state organizations:** At the 2019 AVMA Wellbeing Summit, Dr. Tim Kolb, who is the Ohio VMA Wellness Chair, and I were able to help facilitate a meeting with seven other state wellness representatives and chairs to begin collaborating on our collective programs to find best practices. Our goal was to figure out what is working best for each state and their members. It's our intention to form a coalition to be of service to other state veterinary organizations that wish to implement their own wellness/well-being program(s) and help get them started. We are currently assisting North Dakota and the District of Columbia VMAs with their efforts.
8. **Coordination/Cooperation with UFCVM:** I am on committee for a model wellness curriculum project for the UFCVM. Dean for Students and Instruction Dr. Juan Samper is the chair of this project. We hope this program will serve as a model for wellness and well-being education for all colleges/schools of veterinary medicine in the U.S. and Canada. An important part of this program will be each state's veterinary organization and how they are able to serve their recent graduating members in the transition to practice. It's our intention to present this model at the 2020 AVMA Wellbeing Summit and possibly the AAVMC and AVMA Annual Conferences.

Our beloved profession has gone through some significant changes — and still faces serious challenges ahead. What doesn't change, however, is this: At its core, veterinary medicine is still one of the most rewarding callings in society. Our committee's hope is to empower our friends and colleagues with the tools to allow this to continue to be true for all of us. This hope is not only for those of us who practice veterinary medicine today but for our future colleagues who are studying long hours at schools of veterinary medicine or technology. It's also for the kids. The one who is gently picking up an injured bird or wrapping the leg of their favorite stuffed animal — dreaming of someday helping those who cannot help themselves. That little boy or girl who still lives in the hearts of us all.

## Philip Richmond, DVM, CHC-BCS, CCFP



*Dr. Philip Richmond is a graduate of the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine (UFCVM) and practices in New Port Richey, Florida. He has been in recovery for more than 10 years and is passionate about helping and mentoring medical professionals in early recovery. He currently serves as the chair of both the FVMA Professional Wellness and Well-being Committee and the FVMA Outreach Committee. He is a member of the UFCVM Well-being Curriculum Committee. The committee*

*was formed with the intention to teach wellness and well-being to veterinary students and create a model for veterinary wellness education in North America. He has served on the Board of Directors of the Florida Medical Professionals Group, an organization that supports medical professionals in recovery in the state.*

*Dr. Richmond is a published writer and speaker, a Certified Health Coach — Behavioral Change Specialist, Certified Compassion Fatigue Professional and a Certified QPR Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Instructor. He has earned the Coursera/Penn Foundations in Positive Psychology Specialization Certificate, the BerkeleyX Science of Happiness at Work Professional Certificate and the AVMA Workplace Wellness Certificate. He is currently on schedule for a Certificate in Applied Positive Psychology and becoming a Certified Resilience Trainer in June 2020. In 2019, Dr. Richmond received an FVMA Gold Star Award for his service to the organization and the veterinary profession.*

*He is married to Dr. Carla Channell, who is also a veterinarian. They have two children, three dogs (an Aussie, Beagle-Dachshund mix and a Maltese-Affenpinscher mix), a bevy of cats and turtles, a sulcata tortoise, a ball python and a corn snake. He is a Krav Maga practitioner, and he enjoys weightlifting and functional training.*