

HSVMA Veterinary Awards



Dr. Melinda Merck

2015 HSVMA Veterinary Advocate of the Year: *Dr. Melinda Merck*

HSVMA is proud to award the HSVMA Veterinary Advocate award to Dr. Melinda Merck for her admirable leadership in creating the field of veterinary forensics, based on more

than two decades of involvement with investigations into animal abuse cases across the United States.

Since her 1988 graduation from Michigan State's College of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Merck has been involved with shelters and rescue groups, which brought her into contact with animal abuse cases. As her dedication to helping animal victims grew, she found that she had no resources to advise her in the "how-to's" of forensic investigations. As a result, Dr. Merck sought instruction from attorneys, forensic scientists and medical examiners from the human field and soon became identified as the top expert in the field of veterinary forensic science on the national and international level.

One of Dr. Merck's greatest recognitions came from her involvement in the infamous Michael Vick dog fighting case (2009). Her forensic determinations of the deceased and buried dogs formed the solid foundation for the successful prosecution of Vick's crimes. For her contribution to this investigation, she received awards from the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Attorney's Office, and U.S. Office of the Inspector General.

Dr. Merck has an exhaustive list of publications to her credit, including two essential texts: *Veterinary Forensics: Animal Cruelty Investigations, 2nd Edition* (2013) and *Forensic Investigation of Animal Cruelty: A Guide for Veterinarians and Law Enforcement Professionals* (2006). She has lectured on this subject at schools and universities nationally and internationally since 2006, chairing the Veterinary Forensics: Animal CSI track annually at the NAVC Conference. In 2014, she created the online Veterinary Forensics certificate series for NAVC and AAHA's VetFolio. During 2015, Dr. Merck presented a special webinar series for HSVMA on the subject, "Reporting Suspected Abuse: A Roadmap for the Veterinary Community."



Dr. Peggy Larson

2015 HSVMA Veterinary Practitioner of the Year: *Dr. Peggy Larson*

Dr. Peggy Larson is one of HSVMA's most accomplished members and a pioneer in high-volume and pediatric spay/neuter. Her longtime commitment to providing affordable spay and neuter services for companion animals in her home state of Vermont and throughout the Northeastern region is an inspiration to the profession, with more than

78,000 sterilization surgeries completed by her clinic as of her retirement this year. With those services, Dr. Larson and her team substantially improved the health and welfare of animals in her community as well as prevented countless unwanted animals from being born.

In addition to her direct care work, Dr. Larson is also an effective and active advocate for the humane treatment of all animals. For example, working with HSVMA and other animal welfare groups, Dr. Larson has advocated for better treatment of farm animals, including opposing the extreme confinement of calves in veal crates and pushing for more humane slaughter methods. She also has been a vocal opponent of the cruelty inflicted on animals used in rodeos for events such as calf roping, steer tripping and bull riding.

Dr. Larson generously provides her expertise to law enforcement agencies as a regular consultant on animal cruelty investigations throughout Vermont.

HSVMA is proud to recognize Dr. Larson for her outstanding service and advocacy on behalf of the animals during her veterinary career and to present her with the Veterinary Practitioner of the Year Award.

HSVMA Begins State Representative Program

HSVMA State Representatives Dr. Meredith Rives (left) and Dr. Gary Block join Board member Dr. Paula Kislak for national Humane Lobby Day in Washington, DC.
Photo Credit by The HSUS



In October 2014, HSVMA piloted a State Representative Program consisting of active volunteer veterinarian liaisons who conduct outreach on behalf of HSVMA to their respective state veterinary

medical associations and the broader profession, and serving as a resource on animal welfare-related issues for the veterinary community. HSVMA State Reps also help the organization with legislative initiatives, providing expert witness testimony, submitting legislative support letters, writing letters to the editor and offering other forms of outreach, such as speaking at veterinary schools and to other veterinary professional groups.

Our pilot program began with four Reps—in California, Massachusetts, Minnesota and Rhode Island—who accomplished a great deal of successful outreach in a short period of time. The HSVMA State Representative program is now in full swing and this year we expanded with five additional Reps—in Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, New York and New Jersey.