

Staff Spotlight: Araba Oglesby, SFVS's Newest ES Doctor

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Araba Oglesby, DVM, joined the SFVS Emergency Services Department in early January. Dr. Oglesby was previously an intern at SFVS. We're thrilled to have her on the SFVS team! Below, she answers a few questions about her background and experiences in veterinary medicine:

... From caterpillars to Howlers to dogs and cats!

1. When did you know you wanted to be a veterinarian?

I always knew that I had an intense interest in nature, even as a kid when I would take caterpillars from the crab-apple tree in our yard and put them on my mother's houseplants "because I thought they were hungry and I wanted to watch them change into butterflies" – as I'm told.

In middle school and junior high we had a mentorship program where students could choose a field of interest and spend extracurricular time assisting and learning in that subject. In middle school I chose biology/nature and worked in the Philadelphia Zoo. Though it wasn't glamorous by any stretch of the imagination (cleaning woodchuck cages, working in the petting zoo or dressing up like a butterfly for the tree-house), there were days where I could follow the zookeepers when they fed the elephants or were putting together new vivariums for the incoming reptiles/amphibians. This sparked my interest in wildlife. From there, the next location I chose to be mentored was the local small animal hospital where we would take the family cat. That was where I solidified my interest in veterinary medicine.

2. What's your background? Tell us a little about life pre-SFVS.

My initial goal was to go into wildlife veterinary medicine. While applying and being wait-listed for vet school, I pursued my master's at San Francisco State in animal physiology and behavior with an emphasis in wildlife animal behavior. I studied the Black Howler Monkey in Belize for two years, conducting a general ecology and behavior study comparing Howlers at an archaeological reserve where they were habituated to humans and a pristine site in which they had virtually no human contact.

During all of this I was also working at a small animal veterinary practice on the Pacifica coast. Going through vet school, reality set in (as well as the need to pay off student loans) and I focused on small animal medicine. Post vet school I realized just how much I loved emergency medicine, and set out to study and gain additional experience in the field. I was in general practice before I became an intern at SFVS through the small animal rotating internship (a program emphasizing emergency medicine). Even after the internship, working relief and full-time again in general practice, I maintained the drive toward emergency medicine.

3. What's the toughest part of your job? The most rewarding? The scariest?

The rewarding part is being able to offer hope and care for a patient/client who wants a chance to recover (even if briefly) from a disease or injury. The most rewarding is giving them more time together when they thought there was no hope. The scariest are the times when an animal deteriorates right before your eyes in the face of doing everything you possibly can to help them. The toughest is having to tell an owner/caregiver you did everything you could, but the illness or injury overtook the pet – and then not carry that grief home with you.

4. As an intern at SFVS, and now coming on as an ES doctor, what are a couple of the strangest cases you've seen come through the door ... something that really surprised you?

Funny, I know quite a few things have come through the door, but I can't think of any single cases. I guess the fascinating things dogs have eaten: various socks, underwear, golf balls, whole Kong toys, fishhooks, chopsticks, glasses, rings, a huge block of cheese (whole) and even a cell phone.

Thank you, Dr. Oglesby!