

Animal Wellness Center Stresses Holistic Medicine

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By Eileen Shomo

About four years after Dr. Rose DiLeva began her practice as a veterinarian, she began reading about holistic medicine and believed it would help her animal patients. She was certain, however, that no one would listen to her theories until she became certified as an acupuncture specialist. She is one of about 20 veterinary acupuncturists in the state certified by the International Veterinarian Acupuncture Society, having gone through years of study, akin to achieving another doctoral degree. Before February, her practice was confined solely to her mobile practice. As her acupuncture practice began to grow, she began to realize she could not get to all her patients for the treatments which she felt they were entitled. Finally, with much help from her husband, Tony, she moved her practice into a renovated building on Route 202 in Concord, calling it the "Animal Wellness Center." Since about 90 percent of her practice involves acupuncture and Chinese herbs, the entire building, appropriately enough, is decorated in an Oriental theme. The first floor accommodates a spacious waiting room, examining rooms and operating facilities. The second floor contains Dr. Rose's office, and a large meeting room, where she plans to hold workshops for both her patients' owners and other veterinarians who are interested in holistic medicine. She still maintains her mobile practice, mostly for clients who are elderly or unable to visit her new office. "I can only get to 10 locations in a day," she explained, "and emergencies are much more easily handled in a building. A lot of animals come in here on steroids and medications which can have pretty serious side effects," she said. "After they have gone through at least five or six treatments, they are off the medication." Dr. DiLeva said she still does traditional treatments, such as vaccinations, adding a homeopathic remedy on the side to counteract the side effects from the vaccines. "My practice has changed dramatically," she said. "People find me on my website now (www.altpetdoc.com). "A client can find me if they are looking for something different," she added. "They have tried something else and some will go back home and look up the Chinese herbs to see if they will do what I say they will." Dr. DiLeva said she doesn't get questioned on her methods as much as she thought she would. The veteran veterinarian purchases organic herbs and makes her own tinctures and salves from them which are safe if they are ingested, she said. She eventually plans to grow her own herbs in a garden at her Concord Township home. Chinese herbs support the immune system, she claims, and for dogs and cats going through chemotherapy for cancer, the herbs are a good adjunct to the chemo. Acupuncture also helps with chemotherapy, she said, because there is a certain point on the body which helps boost the white blood cell count. She points proudly to her first cancer patient, who still has a good quality of life after five years, when the original diagnosis gave the animal six to nine months to live. "My ultimate goal is to expand awareness to pet owners," she said. "Read food labels for your pets; if they contain certain by-products, such as BHJ, BHA or ethoxyquin, don't use them." She stresses that some people food is good for pets, such as rice pasta, carrots, steamed broccoli, noodles and occasionally raw garlic, which in some cases works to keep fleas away. She said her new location on Concord Pike, between Smithbridge Road and Naaman's Creek Road, is perfect, with 47,000 people passing by each day, each seeing her sign "Animal Wellness Center," because she is in the business of keeping pets well using natural herbs.