

AVC Vet Camp Earns Top Honors & Student Accolades

As a parent, one of the most important things you can do for your child is to encourage his or her native interests and passions. If they have a genuine love for animals and enjoy science, the field of veterinary medicine could be a viable option. The best way to ensure that your child is well-suited to the animal healthcare field is to enroll them in a comprehensive veterinary camp. ■

There are dozens of vet camps across the country, varying widely in scope, length, and age group. The AVC Veterinary Camp is one of the most reputable programs available. Held at the Atlantic Veterinary College University in Prince Edward Island, Canada, it's one of only a handful of elite, award-winning camps in North America.

Charlotte McCardle, External Relations Officer for the Atlantic Veterinary College, cites the camp's authenticity as one of the main reasons for its success. "Our camp gives students the opportunity to see the many aspects of veterinary medicine in a realistic environment," she notes. "For some students, this is enough to push them forward in their decision to pursue veterinary medicine." Over the years, Charlotte has seen a number of campers go on to enroll in the university's veterinary program after graduating from high school.

The AVC Vet Camp was founded by Dr. Tim Ogilvie, former dean of the Atlantic Veterinary College. Dr. Ogilvie opened the camp in 1999, driven by a desire to help animal-loving students excel in a quickly growing field. In spite of the college's small size, the camp has sparked international interest. Over the past decade, more than 1,400 aspiring veterinarians from around the world have attended to get a firsthand glimpse into the everyday tasks, challenges, and triumphs of a practicing animal doctor.

What sets AVC apart from other vet camps? Charlotte credits the camp's hands-on, highly interactive experience. Students of the AVC Veterinary Camp have access to dozens of interactive activities, designed to provide the perfect mixture of education and fun. They'll tour actual veterinary hospitals, laboratories, and a working dairy farm. "Students get to do physicals on various animals, observe surgeries, learn the basics of radiology, and spend time in pathology and anatomy," says Charlotte. "Simply put, they learn by doing—and they love it."

Some other favorite activities include learning about exotic animals, handling snakes, and seeing various breeds of poultry. The students also enjoy watching agility demonstrations with dogs and learning to complete basic canine

physicals. Equine care is also very popular. “The more they see and do, the more they want to roll up their sleeves and experience it,” says Charlotte.

And don’t just take Charlotte’s word for it—the satisfied campers are more than willing to rave about their time at AVC. Two years ago, the parents of a camper from faraway California sent in a letter saying the program was “worth traveling the content for”. Charlotte’s most personally rewarding moment was when another family confided that their son, who had been almost entirely uncommunicative, had a verbal breakthrough and began excitedly sharing his experiences from the camp with his parents.

Below are just some of the glowing testimonials shared by parents of past students:

"I wanted to thank you all for such a well-organized week of Vet Camp. The program offered so much in the way of interesting and varied experiences. The staff was very congenial and warm, and managed to create a real community feeling in the space of a single week. I was pleased and impressed to learn that the staff had learned the kids' names - and many of the parents' names, too - by mid-week. No small feat given the number of campers."

Flavia's mother from
California

"This is a wonderful camp. It involved a great mix of fun-filled activities that were both "hands-on" and intellectually stimulating. I will highly recommend the camp to my daughter's animal-loving friends."

Judy, parent of camper

"My daughter has never attended camp before this, so I am pleased to see her leave here each day with a smile on her face and hear the excitement in her voice describing the day's events. Working with animals is definitely in her future."

Parent of camper from British Columbia

The camp has also enjoyed national recognition. In 2008, the AVC Vet Camp was awarded the Gold Medal for Best Community Outreach Program in Canada by the Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education. Judges of the AVC Vet Camp have hailed it as “a highly successful and focused program which extends the College community outward.” The CCAE has also praised the camp as displaying “an impressive commitment on the part of AVC staff and students...a real team effort, with excellent results maintained from year to year.”

The AVC Vet Camp holds three five-day sessions per year, usually during the month of July. Catering to junior high students, the camp is limited to students who are entering grades 7, 8, and 9 in the coming year. Applications are accepted by mail only. The number of applications usually exceeds the total number of available spots. To ensure that students are selected in a fair manner, all applications are selected randomly for placement in the camp.

Charlotte maintains that a career in veterinary medicine is often more of a calling than an idle choice, with many students claiming to know from a young age that they would eventually pursue a degree in animal science and medicine. The AVC staff encourages parents to be as supportive as possible. When asked to summarize the ideal candidate for veterinary school, Charlotte describes a well-rounded student with such traits as “animal handling experience, a strong work ethic, a commitment to volunteering and playing an active role in one’s community, and an involvement in sports and music.”

With each new session, Charlotte and the AVC staff are amazed by the students’ curiosity, willingness to learn, and eagerness to share their experiences with animals. “We’re impressed each year by the energy and focus of our campers.”

For more information on the program, visit <http://www.upei.ca/vetcamp/home>, send an e-mail to avc@upei.ca, or call (902) 566-0882.