Written by MARK JAEGER
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In buying Port clinic, Rollmann is returning to his Ozaukee County roots

When businesses change hands under bad circumstances, the transactions are sometimes described as “hostile takeovers.”

"That is anything but an appropriate description for the transfer of ownership of The Little Animal Hospital in Port Washington.

Brian Rollmann has taken over the reins as lead veterinarian from Charlotte Little on the most amicable of terms.

Rollmann completed the purchase of the business at the end of August, coming to Port after 13 years of veterinary practice in West Bend and Milwaukee.

Although he is now the owner of the clinic, Little said she wasn’t going to turn over the business to just any willing buyer.

“Brian might not know he was being interviewed during our discussions, but he was. He was definitely the pick of the litter,” Little said of those interested in buying the thriving business.

For Rollmann, it is a case of returning to his roots. He is an Ozaukee County native and graduate of Port Washington High School.

“My dad lives in Port, and my mom still lives in the home I grew up in in Saukville,” Rollmann said.

In 1999, he completed veterinary studies at the University of Wisconsin.

Although Rollmann has diverse experience in veterinary medicine, he his specialty is skin ailments of animals.

“I would say I spend 70% of my time working in dermatology, and that is something I hope to expand at the clinic,” Rollmann said.

He also intends to upgrade technology at the office, especially in the areas of automated medical record keeping and digital imaging.

“Vets like toys, too,” Rollmann said of the computer-driving enhancements.

Still, he said, there is no need to make major changes at the clinic. That includes the name, which has the advantage of reflecting both the name of its original owner and a description of the clientele.

“The name Little Animal Hospital still fits, and it already has such a great reputation in the community,” Rollmann said.

He said the most appealing aspect of veterinary medicine is the wide range of duties he has.

“My first day here, I got to treat an injured seagull. That isn’t something I got to do in West Bend,” Rollmann said.

“The great thing about being a vet is you can spend a lot of time in surgery, then conducting various tests, counseling a family with end-of-life issues for a pet and just being around a litter of puppies.”

Rollmann said advances in medicine have significantly increased the options for pet care, but he said animal owners are allowed a lot more discretion than they are in setting a course of action for human care.

“I am deliberate in spelling out what their options are, but always respect the owners’ decisions on how far they want to take care,” Rollmann said.

“I enjoy the challenges and diversity of the work as a vet, but felt it was time to branch out into business ownership. I am comfortable in just about any of the areas of veterinary work, and felt it was time to try something added — like managing a small business.”

Rollmann said he spent his first few days at the clinic getting familiar with his colleagues, vendors and patients.

The clinic has a staff of 12, including three doctors. Services include wellness care, diagnostic testing, dentistry, surgery and boarding. The staff also works closely with a number of local specialists.

The staff at one of those specialists, Lakeshore Veterinary, provided the tip that brought Rollmann to The Little Animal Hospital.

“I was talking to someone there who knew I had been looking into buying my own practice, and they said they thought it would be a good fit,” he said.

Rollmann and his wife Amy live in West Bend with their two children. They also have two dogs, an Australian cattle dog named Huckleberry and a Mi-Ki named Olivia.

“All my pets have come through work. Usually they are pets that other people don’t want. I got Olivia because she was bald,” Rollmann said.

Little said she is very comfortable turning over the clinic to Rollmann, and was anxious to reassure clients they will still see familiar faces around the clinic.

“And Dr. Little will remain on our speed dial,” Rollmann added.

Little has been a vet since 1976, following a career path that seemed predestined.

“I knew I wanted to be a veterinarian when I was 9, and started working at a clinic when I was 16 — as soon as they would let me,” she said.

“I have always loved being with animals, and this career just kind of fell into place. I was so lucky to have a practice in a place like Ozaukee County, where people take such good care of their pets.”

Little said her retirement plans are intentionally vague.

“I intend to make more time for family and personal interests, maybe gardening or even taking the time to read a book,” she said.

Little said she also hopes to travel, exploring areas around Wisconsin and renewing friendships made with veterinarians around the world.

A reception for Little and Rollmann will be held from 4 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 10, at the clinic, 2590 Hwy. 32.

Image Information: VETERINARIANS CHARLOTTE LITTLE (left) and Brian Rollmann gave special attention to Cici, a Bichon Frise, at The Little Animal Hospital in Port Washington. Rollmann has purchased the animal clinic.
Photo by Mark Jaeger