Dr. Bob Weedon spent the Christmas holiday of 2006 as he often has over the years, working in his veterinary hospital in Wilmington, N.C. Things are usually slow then, but this year was different. The condition of a puppy admitted to the clinic with a broken leg in early December had worsened considerably and the staff, who’d named the puppy “Johnny,” was mystified. Weedon suggested they test the dog for rabies.

His hunch led to the diagnosis of the first case of canine rabies in New Hanover County in more than 50 years and initiated a hemisphere-wide, $400,000 effort to corral a threat that had escaped for so long. “We had quite a party in the ER that night,” he recalls, referring to the number of people needing vaccinations.

Such events have become a hallmark of Weedon’s career. A Wilmington veterinarian for more than 25 years, he is the senior partner at the College Road Animal Hospital. His clinical, case-based focus has expanded to include a public health perspective. In the process, he has become a leader in both arenas. “I enjoy contributing to the community and putting something back in the system,” he says.

Although he credits his undergraduate advisor at Purdue, Martin Stob, for instilling in him an inclination toward community service, it was an auspicious meeting in 2001 with Dr. Joan McNeil that set Weedon on his current population-based path. McNeil, the animal control services manager for New Hanover (N.C.) County Health Department, was looking for someone to help craft a system to ensure that adopted animals were spayed or neutered. Together, they developed a plan to have animals transferred directly to private veterinary clinics for surgical sterilization before being placed in homes. But the plan resulted in a delay that proved a disincentive to adoption. What was needed to reduce that delay was an on-site spay/neuter facility. So in 2001, at McNeil’s invitation, Weedon joined a team at the University of North Carolina’s Management Academy for Public Health (see page 7), a program of the North Carolina Institute for Public Health, with Dr. Jean McNeil that set Weedon on his community. He is an adjunct professor at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington, where he teaches a course in Epidemiology and one called “Animals and Human Society,” which he developed.

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A proponent of life-long learning, Weedon began to consider pursuing a master’s degree in public health. Hollie Pavlica, an advisor and faculty adviser and adjunct professor in the Department of Biology and Marine Biology at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW), gives a rabies vaccination to a cat at a no-cost rabies clinic co-hosted by the UNCW Pre-Veterinary medical association in partnership with New Hanover County Animal Control as part of World Rabies Day on Sept. 8, 2007. Weedon (left) receives a “kiss” from “Tommy” in spring 2006 to celebrate the UNCW Pre-Veterinary Medical Association’s installation of stations that hold baggies for people to pick up animal waste while walking their pets on the UNCW campus. Weedon is a graduate of the UNCW School of Public Health’s Public Health Leadership Program, Southeast Public Health Leadership institute and management academy for Public Health.

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“The two real professional loves of my life are veterinary medicine and education. Nothing gives me more pleasure than to see a student ‘get it’,” he says, adding that he’s been thrilled to see his students go on to experience success in the veterinary and public health fields.

Weedon was appointed to New Hanover County’s Board of Health in January 2005—while still completing his MPH—and in 2007 was elected vice chairman. He is also a 2009 Graduate of the Southeast Public Health Leadership Institute, a program administered by the School’s North Carolina Institute for Public Health (see page 7).

Weedon and McNeil now organize an annual public health forum for the local veterinarian community on specific issues like rabies awareness. Most recently, he has spearheaded an effort to monitor the quality of the county’s water supply, an endeavor involving the New Hanover County Health Department, the County Commissioners, and UNC-Wilmington. “We’ve ruffled some feathers,” he admits. “Learning how to play the political game has been an important aspect of my education, because you may know how you think it should be done, you may know how you want to do it, but getting elected officials to see what you see can be a challenge.”

Weedon foresees many more opportunities for leadership, given his particular interests and skills developed through the four separate UNC School of Public Health programs he’s completed. “Of the top eight infectious bioterrorism agents,” he notes, “seven of them are zoonotic diseases (transmitted between animals and people)—bird flu, tuberculosis, West Nile virus, anthrax, botulism, Ebola and plague.”

“Those are distinctive features of the public health community,” he says. “Ultimately, I’d like to finish my career doing something at the state or federal level, perhaps in policy development or bioterrorism preparedness—something that would impact a larger section of the population. When the right thing comes along, I’ll know it, and I’ll jump on it.”

— BY PAUL FREELICK

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Leaders continued from page 6

» The leaders profiled in this issue tell us that success does not come from one person’s efforts and abilities alone, but from their ability to inspire others to work with them, and with each other. Working together—as a team—is a theme that other UNC greats also emphasized.

When Michael Jordan was a UNC freshman—long before he became a superstar athlete—he coached, Dean Smith, told him, “Michael, if you can’t pass, you can’t play.”

Smith, one of the most successful coaches in college basketball history, helped his players develop their skills by giving them the same three goals every year, as chronicled in his book, The Carolina Way.

Play Hard: Insist on consistent effort.

Play Smart: Execute properly. Understand and execute the fundamentals.

Play Together: Play unselfishly. Don’t focus on individual statistics.

» Greenberg continued from page 17

Especially in universities, where there is a hierarchy, most of what gets done is more by personal persuasion. A lot has to do with creating enough excitement, enough enthusiasm that other people voluntarily subscribe.

Shortly after HSSC got underway in 2004, South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford awarded Greenberg the Order of the Palmetto, the state’s highest civilian honor, for exceptional service to the state and nation. “During your time as its president, MUSC has enjoyed national recognition in the areas of education, research and patient care,” Sanford said at the time. Still to come, the governor predicted, were even greater achievements, “whose seeds have been planted through your efforts to build alliances with health and educational institutions, both public and private, through the state of South Carolina.”

In building those alliances, Greenberg has drawn on the examples of his parents, whom he calls one of the greatest blessings of his life. His father, the late Dr. Bernard Greenberg, founded and chaired the UNC Department of Biostatistics in the UNC School of Public Health and later served as dean. His mother, Ruth Greenberg, has a graduate degree in chemistry from Yale. She says her son was a very determined and intelligent person from the time he was very young.

In retrospect, his ending up in public health may seem preordained, but he insists he had no clue as a Carolina undergraduate or even medical student at Duke that he would take that route. While doing a master’s in public health at Harvard, he developed a passion for epidemiology, which led him back to the Carolina School of Public Health for a PhD in that field. But he started to develop much earlier the leadership skills he relies on today.

“Young people to be heard and to allow them to feel they’re engaged in the decision-making.”

Ray Greenberg took the lesson to heart. Colleagues like Larry Mohr say he is a leader who lets people know he’s heard them. “He has done a remarkable job in putting together very creative collaborations that have really had a multiplier effect, a synergetic effect in enhancing the effectiveness of what we’re doing here,” Mohr says.

“We don’t have a lot of advantages in South Carolina,” Greenberg says. “But our recent ability to partner effectively—I hope that will be an important legacy.”

— BY KATHLEEN KEARNS

Perhaps the strongest definition of leadership that emerged from our research was that leaders who lead by example are inspiring.

“I think the one true form of leadership is leadership by example,” says Dr. James Porto, clinical assistant professor of health policy and administration and director of the School’s Executive Master’s Program. “You don’t become a leader by holding a certain position—leadership has to be earned. And it starts with ‘self-leadership,’ which is self-discipline and self-management. That’s manifested by success, but also by how a person handles failure.”

So read on about our alumni, faculty and students in this issue of Carolina Public Health. We hope you’ll be as inspired by these stories of leadership as we are.

— BY RAMONA DUBOSE

facilitate

cooperate

Greenberg acquired it being Bernie Greenberg’s son.”

He took away some specific lessons from his father’s experience as dean during the turbulent early 1970s, when there was much anti-establishment sentiment.

He said of his father, “He worked very hard during this time to be perceived for his true values, for promoting equal opportunity, for helping the underserved population.”

Especially where there are differences of opinion or emotional issues, solutions are not quick,” he says he came to understand. “You have to be persistent and consistent. You have to listen a lot. It’s important for people to be heard and to allow them to feel they’re engaged in the decision-making.”

Ray Greenberg took the lesson to heart. Colleagues like Larry Mohr say he is a leader who lets people know he’s heard them. “He has done a remarkable job in putting together very creative collaborations that have really had a multiplier effect, a synergetic effect in enhancing the effectiveness of what we’re doing here,” Mohr says.

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Public Health Leaders: Thomas Ricketts

Thomas Ricketts, (left) professor of health policy at UNC-Chapel Hill, is an avid bicyclist who has successfully completed amateur stages of the Tour de France. As director of the N.C. Rural Health Research Program, Ricketts’ research focus is the study of North Carolina’s health care workforce distribution and its effect on access to care and the health status of North Carolinians.

We have recently anticipated shortages of allied health workers, doctors and dentists, and when we issue a warning that such a thing is about to happen, usually the General Assembly of North Carolina pays attention,” says Ricketts, who is also the Sheps Center deputy director.

“Tom is very creative in terms of thinking about how delivery of health care relates to the workforce supply,” notes Sheps Center Director Dr. Tim Carey, who has known him for more than 20 years.

As head of the Health Policy Analysis Unit at the Sheps Center, Ricketts also works at the federal level advising the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services on health policy issues. He is editor-in-chief of the North Carolina Medical Journal and also serves on advisory committees of the Association of American Medical Colleges and AcademyHealth.

“If there’s a complex health care policy issue, I’d want to turn to Tom rather than anyone else. He’s an innovative and creative thinker,” says Dr. Peggy Leach, chair of the School’s Department of Health Policy and Administration, who has worked with Ricketts since 2002.

Ricketts has been working with French researchers to develop a new, U.S.-style school of public health with campuses in Paris and Rennes. He is involved in planning and teaching at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sante Publique and hopes the affiliation will result in knowledge transfer between UNC and this emerging academic institution.

“I’m hoping that our students and faculty can spend some time working there,” he says. “The EU has set a goal of making Europe the leader in the knowledge-based economies. The United States needs to respond to that, but we also need to know how we can learn from each other.”

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