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New president of veterinarian's group motivated to help vets, animals

By Lucy Properzio

Andover resident Julie E. Haller has been elected president of the Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association. She is a small animal practitioner at Bulger Animal Hospital in North Andover, part of InTown Veterinary Group. This is her 11th year at Bulger.

Haller became involved with the 122-year-old organization in 2003 as its legislative committee chairwoman. Now, she hopes to make MVMA a source for state legislators dealing with laws that affect veterinarians, associates, animals and pet owners.

The MVMA has hired Johnson-Haley, a lobbying firm, "to preserve the Veterinary Practice Act. This act is what defines things vets can do and others cannot. But in hindsight, I am not sure that really explains why we hired them. Basically, there is legislation being intro-

duced every day that potentially affects animals and the way we practice and most legislators do not know we exist if they have questions," said Haller. "Our goal there is to be contact people for them; for them to seek our opinion about legislation as animal experts."

"Better laws need to be made to make sure that needs are met and that the government is aware that needs exist. Legislative issues will be focused on more heavily than in the past," said Sommer Aweidah, marketing director at InTown Veterinary Group. InTown owns five hospitals and three facilities, including Bulger Animal Hospital.

With MVMA, Haller also is actively involved with creating continuing education conferences that veterinarians can attend to maintain their degrees. "The MVMA is the body in Massachusetts that helps decide what

classes to take and what credits will work. It is a big part of what they do," said Aweidah.

Haller spends approximately three to five hours a week contributing to the MVMA.

"I really enjoy interacting with other people on the board who love their profession and who are committed to moving things forward," she said. "I feel like I have a hand in where the profession is headed."

"She is one of those people you always want to be around. She really cares about her clients, pets and her family. She can do it all," said Aweidah.

Haller received her undergraduate degree from Yale University and her doctorate in veterinary medicine from Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine, now known as the Cummings School. She has lived in Andover since April 1998.