

Wildlife Veterinary Care

Dr. Burwell is back to treating those in need

By Victoria L. Kidd

Clarke County and the surrounding areas are beautiful in their natural simplicity. The region is home to an abundance of wildlife, many of which owe their lives and wellbeing to Dr. Belinda Lee Burwell, a well-known expert in wildlife care who lives right here in the county.

Burwell, a graduate of Duke

University in North Carolina and subsequently of Tufts New England School of Veterinary Medicine in Massachusetts, is best known locally as the founder of the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center (BRWC) in Boyce, but she has turned her attention to a new endeavor called Wildlife Veterinary Care (WVC). This new charitable

corporation was formed to serve a similar purpose as the BRWC. She explains, "I formed WVC for the same reason I founded the BRWC 15 years ago: to provide specialized veterinary care for sick and injured wildlife."

The WVC's 501c3 status as a charitable organization was recently granted, but Burwell's reputation in the community garnered significant support even before contributions became tax deductible. For Burwell, building the new enterprise is essentially like starting over, meaning these contributions are critical to operations and to the lives of the animals she treats.

No longer working out of the BRWC's space, Burwell is serving patients out of her farm site and from the offices of Roseville Veterinary Clinic (rosevillevet.com). It's changed the layout of her workweek from what she was used to previously, but it's a structure



Release of recovered bald eagle.



with which she is familiar. "My days now are very similar to how they were when I started treating wildlife at my farm 15 years ago," she says. "Dr. Tom Leahy of the Roseville Veterinary Clinic continues to generously let me use his vet clinics for radiographs and surgery. In addition to caring for the animals, my days

are currently busy building new cages and acquiring the supplies I need to care for the sick and injured."

Much of the needed supplies and equipment has been provided to her, but there is much still needed. Donors have provided kennels and supplementary supplies, while other contributors have made

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Worship Schedule:

December 24: Christmas Eve

5:00 pm Candlelight Communion Service

8:30 pm Carol Singing

9:00 pm Candlelight Communion Service

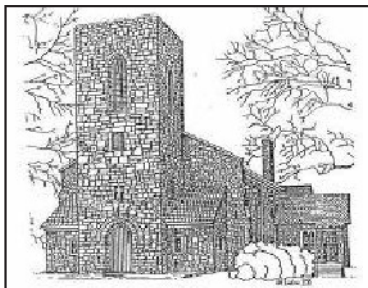
December 25: Christmas Day

10:30 am Christmas Communion Service

December 27: The First Sunday after Christmas

8:00 am Holy Communion Service

10:30 am Christmas Lessons and Carols followed by a Festive Reception



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donations through a dedicated PayPal account included on the operation's Facebook page. Burwell relays that the costs associated with this venture are understandably high, but the community has already demonstrated its support of the endeavor with early financial and in-kind donations.

That support is a validation for Burwell, both in terms of the community's belief that wildlife care is important and in terms of the public's understanding of her role as the most widely known wildlife ambassador in this region. Burwell's separation from the BRWC—an event that came as a shock to many in the region—was not enough, it would seem, to slow her desire to serve the wildlife she so deeply cares about. Her focus has been renewed with her commitment to the WVC.

"My focus is on providing much needed veterinary care for injured and sick wildlife in this area. That has always been my focus. I intend to provide that care to rescued wildlife, to support wildlife rehabilitators and organizations with sick and injured wildlife, to educate the public through my webpage and Facebook page, and in the future, to train others to do the same."

The fledgling operation has already provided that care to



Treatment of injured screech owl.

numerous animals, and many locals have reached out to Burwell directly for help (even before she had fully formed the vision behind her new endeavor). "As soon as the Facebook page went up, two people who had found injured owls contacted me through the page and were able to get the owls to me quickly so they could be helped," she explains. "Today, I helped Frederick County Animal Control with a crow that had become tangled in kite string and then caught in a tree. I've been dealing with an outbreak of canine distemper on a farm where two sick raccoons and two sick skunks have been found. One of the sick skunks is improving while still undergoing treatment."

These animals would have

likely not survived or would have been left with long-term disabilities without Burwell's actions. She asserts that it's always been about the animals, and she is excited about the new organization.

"While it is hard to believe that I am no longer affiliated with the BRWC, an organization I founded on my farm 15 years ago, I am looking forward to providing care to wildlife through my new charity, WVC," she says. "Providing care for wildlife and educating others about wildlife has been my life's work, and it will continue to be my life's work. I hope people will continue to support my efforts at Wildlife Veterinary Care."

Burwell perceives her biggest challenge to be getting the word out about her new operations. For now, those who want to support these efforts or those who need to speak to someone about an animal in distress can reach out by phone or email at 540-664-9494 or belindadvn@gmail.com. To follow what is going on with the initiative, "like" them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Wildlife-Vet-Care-443042479213329/>.

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