



The Animal Neurology Center

FEBRUARY 2026



[www.AnimalNeurology.com](http://www.AnimalNeurology.com)

## A word from the owner

One of the most exciting—and frankly humbling—parts of building the Animal Neurology Center was the opportunity to create a culture from scratch.

In my experience, a focus on culture, leadership initiatives, and staff growth is often reactive. It's a corrective move, born from low morale, high turnover, or negative client feedback.

Culture becomes something you "fix" when something is broken. From the very beginning at ANC, we wanted to take a different approach. We chose to be intentional—to make culture a priority from day one.

One of the most powerful tools in shaping culture is a clearly defined set of core values. Core values have always fascinated me. They're often framed as how we define ourselves—our wants, our needs, our internal compass. What has become increasingly apparent to me over time is that while core values may originate inwardly, they are at their most beautiful when they describe what we offer outwardly to the world.

Core values are promises. They're not aspirations tucked away in a handbook; they're lived behaviors and they must be practiced every day.

Another aspect of core values that I find endlessly compelling is the opportunity to lean into values that aren't always the most obvious choice. Take the client experience, for example. When we ask how to make a family's visit at the ANC as supportive and meaningful as possible, the natural instinct is to lean into Compassionate Excellence. And rightly so. But what happens if, instead, we lead with Education at Every Level?

Suddenly, the approach shifts. We recognize that most pet parents want more than a consult—they want understanding. They want to truly grasp their dog's condition, the "why" behind recommendations, and the options available to them. That realization opens the door to new ways of supporting families: written resources, visual aids, and encouragement to ask deeper questions. We use our technology to generate client informatics in parallel to referral summaries. We create discharge instructional videos that can be re-referenced from home. Education becomes empowerment—and the client experience is more than treatment outcome alone.

This kind of perspective shift—using core values as lenses for creative problem-solving—is where extraordinary outcomes live. That is where true "Value" is created.

The core values of the Animal Neurology Center are not top-down mandates. They are the product of a staff-wide voice—a collective articulation of who we are, who we want to be, and how we want to serve. I'm incredibly proud to share them with you.



# The ANC Core Values

## Compassionate Excellence

We lead with empathy and treat every patient and family with reverence. We deliver exceptional medical care without compromising kindness.

## Candor & Integrity

Honesty is our foundation. We communicate with transparency and trust—within our team, with clients, and with our partners.

## Commitment to Growth

We invest in the growth and fulfillment of every team member. Personal development, clinical mastery, and curiosity are celebrated and expected.

## Luxury Experience, Always

We deliver an elevated, thoughtful experience at every touchpoint. From exam room to recovery suite, clients come first—always.

## Education at Every Level

We are educators and learners. We mentor students, support colleagues, and share knowledge to strengthen the profession.

## Innovation with Impact

We collaborate with industry to shape the future of veterinary medicine. Our work innovates, validates, and advances the tools of tomorrow.

## Pride in Our Place

St. Louis is our home and our launchpad. We are proud to represent our community as a national destination for veterinary neurology.

Culture is not something you finish building—it's something you steward. At the ANC, we remain committed to listening, evolving, and holding ourselves accountable to these values every single day. That commitment, above all else, is what defines us. I'd like to offer immense gratitude for our leadership coach Laura Neff of New Atlas Coaching (<https://www.newatlascoaching.com>). Her guidance and light both laid the groundwork and built the foundation the ANC stands on.

In this issue we continue to spotlight the heroes of the ANC—Staff Profiles, Industry partners, Trainee stories and a few pearls from recent education experiences. We add expert columns and are excited to grow this piece of us with you. From all of us, thank you for trusting the ANC.



**Fred Winger, VMD, MS, DACVIM (Neurology)**

Owner / Neurologist / Neurosurgeon



## Meet an ANC Team Member

### Nichol “Nikki” Moreno Client Advocate & Patient Navigator

**Q: What first drew you to veterinary medicine?**

Animals have always had my heart. Growing up in a military family meant moving often, but my grandparents’ farm in Ohio was my constant. My grandmother shared my deep love for animals, and that’s where I fell in love with horses and farm life. From a young age, I was convinced I would become a veterinarian—ideally working with large animals on a farm or ranch of my own.



**Q: Your career path hasn't been a straight one. How did that unfold?**

Life took me on a path I never could have planned. After experiencing significant personal loss and becoming a young single mother at 19, my veterinary dreams were put on pause. I became a licensed practical nurse and spent five years working in nursing homes. Caring for patients at the end of their lives shaped me deeply—it taught me presence, patience, and how powerful compassion can be. I was often drawn to the most difficult patients, and over time, those relationships became the most meaningful.

**Q: How did you transition from human healthcare back to animals?**

Even while nursing, my love for animals never faded. When I saw a veterinary clinic hiring technicians, I took a leap of faith, left human nursing, and became what I call an “animal nurse.” It felt like coming home. I trained on the job and went on to spend more than a decade in veterinary medicine, much of that time as a surgical technician.

**Q: You’ve had a unique blend of clinical experiences—can you tell us more about those?**

One of the veterinarians I worked with specialized in marine medicine, which gave me extraordinary opportunities to work with dolphins, seals, sea turtles, penguins, alligators, exotic birds, and more. Sea turtles and alligators were always my favorites. Those years built my confidence and adaptability and taught me how to stay calm and focused in complex, high-stakes situations.



## Meet an ANC Team Member

**Q: Oncology has been a major part of your professional identity. What did that chapter mean to you?**

Oncology work shaped me in profound ways. I spent time working in emergency medicine before joining an oncology service, where I learned how to support families through some of their most emotionally difficult moments. Oncology isn't just about medicine—it's about walking alongside people, helping them understand options, and offering hope and dignity, even when outcomes are uncertain. That work strengthened my communication skills and deepened my appreciation for the human-animal bond.

**Q: Ministry has also played a central role in your life. How did that influence your career?**

Ministry is not a side chapter in my life—it's woven into everything I do. After moving to the St. Louis area, I spent six years working at a pregnancy center, eventually serving as a director. That role required leadership, empathy, counseling, and the ability to support people facing life-altering decisions. It was incredibly meaningful work and reaffirmed my belief that service, compassion, and presence are powerful forms of healing.

**Q: How did those experiences lead you to the Animal Neurology Center?**

After years in both oncology and ministry, I felt a strong pull to return to veterinary medicine—but in a place where compassion, excellence, and teamwork truly mattered. I prayed for clarity, and then I saw ANC was hiring. Something immediately resonated with me. I reached out, sent my resume, and it quickly became clear that this was where I was meant to be.

**Q: What does your work at ANC mean to you personally?**

For me, this work is still ministry—it just looks different. Helping others, easing fear, and supporting families during vulnerable moments is how I live out my faith. I feel incredibly honored to do that work at ANC.

**Q: Outside of work, what brings you joy?**

Baking—especially pies! If I weren't in veterinary medicine, I'd open a coffee and pie café. I also love reading, particularly biblical history, going to the movies with friends, and spending time with my grandchildren.

**Q: What do you love most about working at ANC?**

The team, without question. The support here is genuine, and everyone is deeply invested in the mission. I also love the clients. In my cytarabine role, I'm able to build relationships and be part of giving families more quality time with their pets. When someone thanks me for that time—those moments stay with me. I'm proud to be part of this family.





## Case of the Month: Maggie

Maggie is a six-year-old spayed female Australian Cattle Dog mix who presented to the Animal Neurology Center for sudden onset paralysis of her pelvic limbs. She had been playing when she suddenly cried out and immediately became unable to use her back legs.

On presentation, Maggie was unable to voluntarily move her pelvic limbs. However, she maintained good muscle tone, had intact sensation in her feet, and showed no signs of spinal pain. The remainder of her neurologic examination was normal.

Based on these findings, we localized the problem to the spinal cord between the third thoracic (T3) and third lumbar (L3) vertebrae. This localization is the fundamental purpose of the neurologic examination—to determine where a problem is occurring so we can narrow down what the most likely causes are. Once the location is identified, we consider factors such as the patient's age, breed, sex, speed of onset, progression of signs, and presence or absence of pain.

Because Maggie's signs developed very suddenly and were non-painful, our primary considerations included:

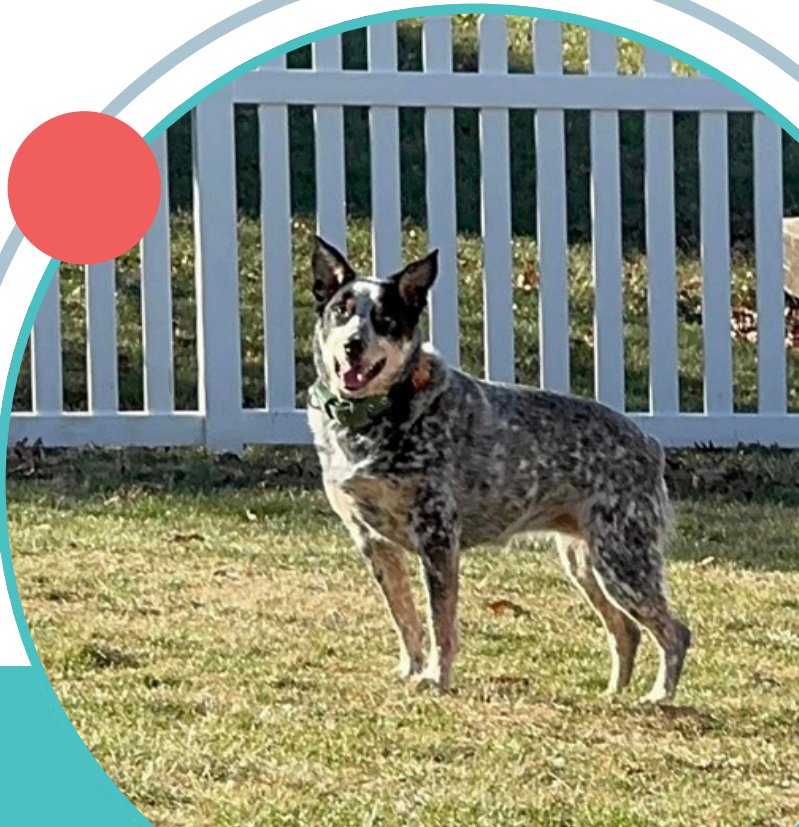
- A vascular event affecting the spinal cord (essentially a spinal stroke)
- Certain forms of intervertebral disc disease

Given the severity of her neurologic deficits, an MRI of the spine was recommended. MRI imaging of the region between the 13th thoracic vertebra and the first lumbar vertebra (T13–L1) revealed a focal area of bruising (contusion) within the spinal cord, directly over the T13–L1 disc space. The disc itself appeared smaller than expected.

This imaging pattern is very common and is most consistent with one of two related conditions:

- **Fibrocartilagenous embolism (FCE)**, also referred to as ischemic myelopathy, and
- **Acute non-compressive nucleus pulposus extrusion (ANNPE)**

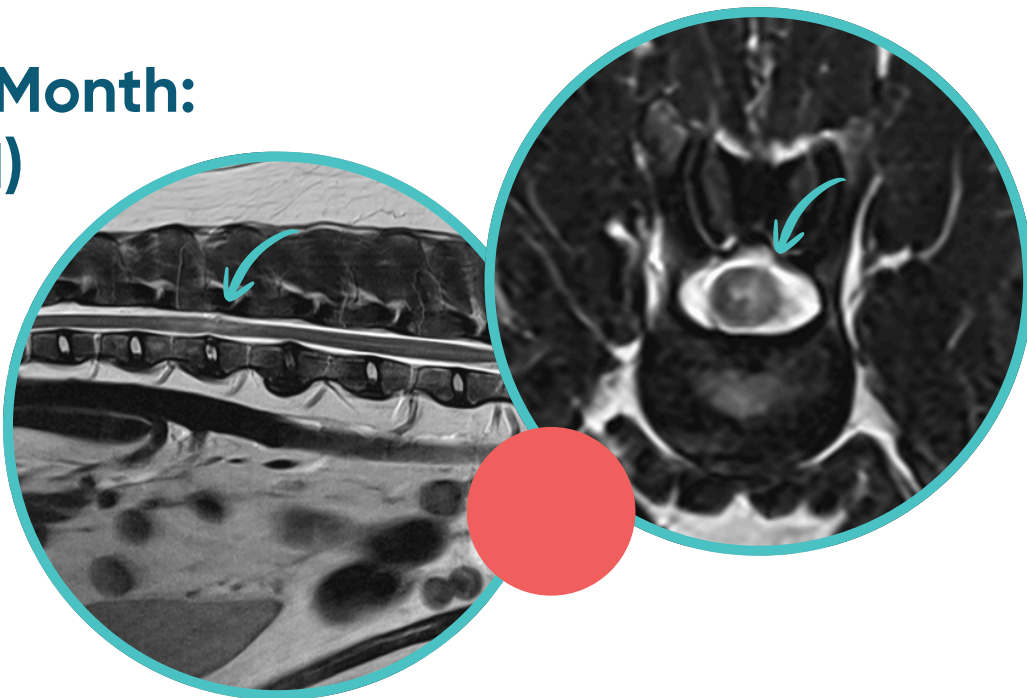
**Check out the imaging on the next page and scan to watch more of Maggie's story!**



## Case of the Month: Maggie (cont'd)

The Differentials:

- **Fibrocartilaginous embolism (FCE)**, also referred to as ischemic myelopathy, and
- **Acute non-compressive nucleus pulposus extrusion (ANNPE)**



While these are complex terms, the concept is straightforward. In FCE, it is believed that a small fragment of cartilage temporarily blocks blood flow to part of the spinal cord, resulting in injury. In ANNPE, disc material rapidly impacts the spinal cord, causing a bruise, but then dissipates quickly and does not cause ongoing compression. These two conditions are often difficult to distinguish, and in many cases the distinction is largely academic. They appear very similar on imaging and, most importantly, they recover in very similar ways.

Neither condition requires surgical decompression. Instead, treatment focuses on intensive rehabilitation, allowing the spinal cord not only to heal but to retrain itself to transmit signals to the pelvic limbs.

Because Maggie retained deep pain sensation and good limb tone, we were optimistic about her prognosis. With rehabilitation, she has regained full function, is comfortable, and continues to do very well.

Maggie's case is an excellent reminder that there are many causes of back-leg paralysis, and not all of them require surgery. We are thrilled with her recovery and look forward to seeing her continued progress.

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**“We can't say enough about the staff at ANC! Maggie was released to “normal” activity. She's free to run around in the yard and no longer needs to be on a leash. Her strength and muscle tone are good. Her reflexes are intact. She lacks a little proprioception in her left rear leg. That may get a little better over time. Overall, it's back to barking at the neighborhood dogs and chasing the rabbit!!”**

**-Amber Weems, Maggie's mom**

## Industry Partners

The evolution of veterinary specialty medicine has been a long and fascinating one. There was a time when specialty colleges did not exist—when expertise emerged simply because a professor was deeply interested in a subject and willing to pursue it. Over time, formal specialty colleges were established, and specialists in disciplines such as surgery, neurology, ophthalmology, and internal medicine filled the halls of teaching hospitals.

As the number of specialists grew, many transitioned into private practice, developing multidisciplinary hospitals with capabilities rivaling their university counterparts. These centers treated higher volumes of patients, often with less emphasis on education and research. About two decades ago, during an economic downturn, another shift became apparent: specialty medicine proved to be remarkably recession-resilient. This drew the attention of private equity and venture capital seeking investments that were both stable and high-growth. Today, the majority of large multidisciplinary hospitals are corporately owned.

While these hospitals can deliver exceptional medicine, consolidation carries consequences. The Animal Neurology Center (ANC) stands at the forefront of a new renaissance—the resurgence of single-specialty, veterinarian-owned hospitals. This movement is driven by clinicians, both young and experienced, who are committed to returning the profession to its veterinary-owned roots, practicing high-level medicine that remains accessible to clients while prioritizing staff fulfillment and professional sustainability.



# LiveOakBank.

This renaissance is possible because of financial partners who recognize the earning potential, discipline, and vision of clinicians and are willing to invest in their small business endeavors. ANC is a strong advocate for Live Oak Bank, and particularly **William Frazier**, SVP of Specialty Veterinary & Specialty Medical, and **Nina Murray**, Business Development Officer. Their support has extended far beyond a loan. They have enabled us to build a hospital that practices the highest level of medicine without compromise—never sacrificing tools, team, or facilities along the way. Live Oak Bank continues to help our colleagues across the country—both general practitioners and specialists—develop and grow their own practices. Together, we have helped independent veterinarians reach their vision of success, reinforcing that veterinarian owned medicine is not only viable, but essential to the future of our profession.



**"Working alongside such talented board-certified veterinary medical professionals has been such a sincere source of pride for our team. It's been truly rewarding for us to watch and support these talented professionals as they build hospitals from scratch and grow them into such powerhouses."**

**-William Frazier**

# Resident Spotlight: Dr. Allison DuPont

Did you know that The Animal Neurology Center has partnered with the University of Missouri to run a hybrid neurology residency program for more than 13 years? Yes, we haven't been open for more than one, but Dr. Winger has maintained the program since 2013, committed to training the future torchbearers of our specialty. After veterinary school, doctors may enter clinical practice or pursue advanced specialty training—an intensely competitive pathway reserved for the most accomplished graduates. Candidates typically complete a rotating internship in small animal medicine and surgery, followed by a specialty internship and/or a three-year residency in their chosen field.

Traditionally, residents must choose between the didactic depth of a university program or the case volume and diversity of private specialty hospitals. The ANC–MU hybrid program was designed to eliminate that tradeoff. Residents spend approximately two-thirds of their time at the University of Missouri and one-third at ANC, benefiting from close collaboration between faculty at both institutions. This unified approach ensures consistency in mentorship, diagnostics, and patient care. The program supports four residents total, with a resident present at ANC year-round, and every case is directly mentored by board-certified neurologists—from physical examination through diagnostics and treatment planning.

Our residents truly represent the cream of the crop. Beyond enthusiasm and ambition, they enrich ANC with advanced knowledge of current literature, state-of-the-art techniques, and fresh academic perspective. We are incredibly proud to train alongside them.

This month, we are pleased to spotlight Dr. Allison DuPont, one of our third-year—or Chief residents. Originally from the Northeast, Allison's veterinary journey has made the Midwest her temporary home. She is especially well known for her exceptional medical neurology skills, with a keen eye for subtle diagnostic changes and a talent for uncovering subclinical disease. Complementing this strength, she is also highly skilled in advanced imaging interpretation and surgery.



Dr. DuPont is currently leading a research investigation into swallowing dysfunction in dogs, and she has a strong long-term interest in collaborating with biotechnology partners to help translate cutting-edge techniques into meaningful applications for companion animals.

Outside the hospital, you'll likely find Allison scouting out the best study-friendly coffee shops around St. Louis with her partner in crime Willow—or exploring the city's local food scene. We are fortunate to have her as part of the ANC team and excited to see the impact she will continue to make in veterinary neurology.

# From the CE Lecture Hall

## Live at VMX 2026

Dr. Wininger had the opportunity to speak to veterinary professionals at this year's annual VMX conference in Orlando, FL. A packed house also brought some familiar St. Louis faces in the audience, too!

**Seizure Emergencies: From Stabilization to In-Hospital Management and Pain Is Inevitable, Suffering Is Optional: Managing the Painful Patient Beyond Anti-Inflammatories** were both recorded and available to watch on VMX Virtual until March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

<https://navc.com/vmx-event/virtual/>



## Key Takeaways: Seizure Emergencies Lecture

### ✓ The timing and frequency of seizures matter in treatment decisions.

Seizure medications should be considered when seizures occur more than once every three months or in cases with underlying causes. Early and aggressive treatment can help manage frequency and severity.

### ✓ The Importance of Early and Aggressive Treatment

In cases of Status Epilepticus, aggressive treatment with midazolam or diazepam is crucial to stop the seizures from causing further brain damage. Multiple doses may be necessary to manage the seizures effectively.

### ✓ Breed-Specific Considerations

Certain breeds, such as Border Collies and Australian Shepherds, have a higher likelihood of developing severe idiopathic epilepsy and should be treated earlier. Toy breeds, like Pugs and Yorkies, may have autoimmune brain inflammation (e.g., GME) that requires different treatment approaches.

# **ANC monthly event: Trivia Night!**

## *Pride in Our Place*

At the Animal Neurology Center, we've built a tradition of hosting monthly events for the veterinary community of St. Louis. These gatherings are typically anchored in what you expect from us—RACE-approved continuing education, thoughtful programming, and topics that span neurology and beyond. But this past month, we decided to shake things up. Instead of lectures and learning objectives, we hosted our first-ever Veterinary Trivia Night—and it was an absolute blast.

Watching veterinary teams—veterinarians and technicians alike—from across the region come together to let loose, laugh, and enjoy some unbridled fun inside Animal Neurology Center was a small but meaningful reminder of why we built this space in the first place. Community matters. Connection matters. And sometimes, learning takes a back seat to simply enjoying one another's company.

This is what we mean when we say "Pride in Our Place."



### **Congrats to the Winners!**

#### **First Place: Vogel Veterinary Hospital**

Winner of a pizza party for their hospital

#### **Second Place: Vet Group of Chesterfield**

Winner of a Clementine's ice cream party courtesy of Clementine's Naughty & Nice Creamery

#### **Third Place: Chesterfield Veterinary Center**

Winner of custom laser-engraved ANC mugs, generously crafted by McNail's Woodworks

[www.mcnails-woodworks.com](http://www.mcnails-woodworks.com)

We're excited to continue blending education, connection, and fun as we build regular gatherings for our veterinary community—sometimes with CE credits, sometimes with trivia buzzers, and always with purpose.

### **Think You Could've Won?**

**Here are three trivia questions from the night—answers below (no peeking):**

- 1. What was the name of the golden retriever on Full House?**
- 2. The tsetse fly is the vector for what disease?**
- 3. Where was the world's first veterinary school established?**

1. Comet  
2. African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness)  
3. Lyon, France (1762), founded in response to a devastating cattle plague

**Answers:**



# Education & Events Calendar



**Thursday,  
February 26<sup>th</sup>  
7:00 pm**

## **Ophthalmology Faux Paws | Dr. Zimmerman of Animal Eye Associates (ANC | St. Louis, MO)**

Most common misdiagnosed or mismanaged ophtho cases!



**Sunday,  
March 29<sup>th</sup>  
9:30 am**

## **Mimosas in March | Dr. Michael Warshaw, Staff Veterinarian St. Louis Zoo (ANC | St. Louis, MO)**

Join us for a morning lecture (and mimosa!) and a look behind the curtain of veterinary care within zoos.



## WHERE YOU'LL FIND ANC DOCTORS SPEAKING

### **• February 14–18, 2026 – Western Veterinary Conference (WVC)–Las Vegas, NV**

Speaker: Dr. Fred Wininger  
12 hours of lecture including 3D printing in veterinary medicine, seizure management, and management of megaesophagus

### **• March 12–15, 2026 – International Veterinary Seminars (IVS)–Kauai, HI**

Speaker: Dr. Fred Wininger  
8-hour module on emergent neurologic conditions and their management

### **• March 31 – April 2, 2026 – Southeast Veterinary Neurology Conference–Miami, FL**

Speaker: Dr. Fred Wininger  
Electrophysiologic techniques for neuromuscular disease, presented to veterinary residents

### **• April 29–May 1, 2026 – Siemens Innovation Summit–Nashville TN**

Speaker: Dr. Fred Wininger  
“Fur Fields and Paw Pulses: Inside Veterinary Neuroimaging”. Dr. Wininger teaches human imaging technologists about the challenges faced in veterinary imaging.

### **• May 29, 2026 – Fetch by DVM 360–Nashville, TN**

Speaker: Dr. Fred Wininger  
Dr. Wininger speaks on a variety of neurologic topics. Our team will be onsite with our booth showcasing the ANC.

### **• June 11–14, 2026 – ACVIM Forum– Seattle, WA**

Speaker: Dr. Fred Wininger  
Dr. Wininger will present a keynote lecture on Artificial Intelligence and its impact on Veterinary MRI.