

Specialized veterinary critical care center to open in Naples

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The Collier County Board of County Commissioners has approved a premier specialty veterinary hospital as part of the region's job creation project spearheaded by the Economic Development Council of Collier County (EDC). The Animal Specialty Hospital of Florida, on track to open mid-March, will be the only 7 days/ week, 24-hour animal emergency hospital serving Collier County and the only specialty/referral hospital of its kind in southwest Florida.

Widespread demand from pet owners for advanced veterinary care for their animals has resulted in the emergence of private practice veterinary specialty centers and clinics equipped with the most advanced diagnostic and therapeutic equipment. Acting as an extension of and partnering with the primary care veterinarian, The Animal Specialty Hospital of Florida will deliver state-of-the-art, compassionate care in a centralized facility located at 10130 Market Street in Naples, just off Interstate 75 at exit 101. The new 7,350-square-foot center, the largest and most technologically advanced animal specialty hospital in Southwest Florida, will employ at least 28 employees in the first three years with an average wage of \$55,000. Board-certified specialists in the following fields will see appointments, by referral from the patient's primary care veterinarian only: Neurology/neurosurgery, orthopedic surgery/ sports medicine and general surgery, internal medicine, critical care, physical rehabilitation and oncology. Much like their human counterparts, the hospital never closes. The board-certified specialists will be on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week for consultations. A board-certified radiologist will be available on a consultation basis for radiographic interpretation of imaging studies.

"There are no board-certified veterinary neurologists/neurosurgeons, internists, oncologists, criticalists, nor advanced veterinary imaging centers in the southwest Florida region that includes Collier, Lee, Hendry, Glades and Charlotte counties," said founding member Dr. Michelle Carnes. "The nearest neurologist/neurosurgeon and comprehensive imaging center is 100 miles and 290 miles away, respectively. This facility will fulfill a critical need for advanced pet health care in the region."

Similar to when a human patient is referred by a primary care physician to a specialist, so will a pet be referred by a primary veterinarian to the Animal Specialty Hospital of Florida. "The successful partnership between the primary care veterinarian and the specialist can provide top-notch care for pets while maximizing quality of life through periods of illness," said Dr. Ayoob.

The following pet care services will be provided at night and on the weekends/holidays:

- Walk- in emergency services
- Inpatient/critical case management and hospitalization
- Advanced life support including mechanical ventilation
- Emergency surgery

The hospital will feature:

- Specialty care wards, including a full-service ICU
- Three surgical suites equipped for minimally invasive surgery
- An in-house physical rehabilitation center
- A high-field MRI
- A helical CT
- Digital radiography
- Ultrasound and endoscopic procedures
- An in-house laboratory

"The only other facility that has such advanced scan equipment is located at the University of Florida in Gainesville," said Collier County Commission Chairman Fred Coyle. "Having a hospital of this caliber in Naples will be a draw for residents here and throughout the State as well as other businesses related to veterinary care."

In addition to Dr. Carnes, who has been in private practice in Ft. Lauderdale and is board-certified in veterinary neurology/neurosurgery, other founding members include Dr. Ashley Ayoob, who became board- certified in Critical Care/ Emergency Medicine and Internal Medicine at the Animal Medical Center in NYC,; Dr. Marc Havig, a board-certified veterinary surgeon who grew up in Naples and is a graduate of Naples High; and Eric Carnes, a Florida native who will serve as hospital administrator. Together they chose Naples for its pet-friendly population that was being underserved by specialty veterinary medicine.

"Our goal is to offer pet owners the same level of medical care for their pets as they receive themselves," said Dr. Havig.

Through a combination of local and state incentives, the EDC offers programs that appeal to businesses and will create high-wage jobs in Collier County. The Collier County Economic Stimulus Program was established by the Collier County Board of Commissioners in 2003 to support the overall economic diversification goals of Collier County. The program is designed to support both the expansion of existing industry, as well as the recruitment of new industry to Collier County.

Companies that are eligible to participate in the Economic Stimulus Program must be

in an EDC approved target industry, create a minimum number of new jobs, generate a minimum of 50 percent of the company's revenue from outside Collier County and meet minimum average wage requirements for new, as well as existing employees.

For more information, contact the Economic Development Council of Collier County at (239) 263-8989 or send an e-mail to beth@enaplesflorida.com

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