



## VHMA MEMBER PROFILE



### Shelley Johnson, CVPM

The beginning for Shelley was simply answering a help-wanted ad for a veterinary assistant at a local two-doctor small animal AAHA practice. She had a nearly finished Bachelor's degree in education and plenty of court time as a collegiate basketball player. Although she lacked skills specifically needed in a veterinary office, she had a few transferable skills and a desire to be in the environment. She was looking for a second job to assist her financially so that she could return to school and finish her degree as soon as possible. She had hoped to be hired at the veterinary office.

Grateful for the first veterinary assistant job she held, Shelley wanted to find a busy practice that offered multi-species veterinary care. In 1990, she found a veterinary assistant job at Animal Clinic in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She was the full-time assistant to three DVMs in this busy and growing, multi-species, zoo medicine practice. Staff leveraging and efficient staff utilization were topics of the future. She spent the first four and one-half years at this practice operating under the now recognized "get 'er done" mantra. The practice owner and his wife recognized the need for an "office" manager as the business grew and asked Shelley if she would like a promotion.



The term "promotion" still has Shelley scratching her head. Unaware of what the job duties of an office manager were; unsuspecting of the demands of the job, Shelley viewed each hurdle or challenge as an opportunity for learning and growth. It was apparent early on that any veterinary management continuing education would be beneficial. She attended several AAHA management programs, including VMI. She finished her Bachelor's degree; and, she wanted to earn the CVPM designation. The job had transformed into a career for her and the promotion clearly opened the doors of opportunity for business and personal growth.

In 2000, Shelley was faced with a dilemma. Her life-partner had a job offer in New Mexico; and, Shelley's career was developing nicely at the Grand Rapids practice. What to do? Shelley contemplated the work-life balance and approached her employer: "I need to talk with you." She had rehearsed a few introductory statements but had prepared a four-page written proposal that outlined how she might be able to continue to serve Animal Clinic in Grand Rapids while living 22 hours away in New Mexico. She had also prepared "Plan B" that included an offer to her employer that she would stay and train, without time restrictions, a replacement for her position. Her employer immediately decided that they would attempt the tele-managing strategy.

There have been a few minor bumps along the way but overall, this management arrangement has worked for the past six and one-half years. Shelley attributes the success of the practice to the staff. "Their dedication to our clients is foremost. Our management system has an unconventional component but they believe in what we do and how we do it. They make it happen. I believe they have adopted the 'get 'er done' mantra themselves."

In preparation of the CVPM designation, Shelley enjoyed attending St. Petersburg College Veterinary Hospital Management online for 15 months as well as reading the VHMA recommended readings. In 2005, she proudly achieved the designation.

Since 2000, Shelley has moved from New Mexico to Florida (these were the minor bumps) and now resides in Virginia. She continues to be an administrator for both practices in Michigan and began Company 42, a veterinary business solutions company in 2006.

Learn about how Shelley's tele-managing works. She will be making a presentation, "*Onside or Online...Managing a Veterinary Practice from a Distance,*" at the upcoming VHMA Management Retreat in February.