2016 Distinguished Alumni

Donald L. Burton, MS, DVM
For his vision and dedication to wildlife rehabilitation, his work to foster awareness of the interface issues between people and wildlife, and his commitment to One Health, we are pleased to recognize Dr. Donald (Don) L. Burton as a 2016 Distinguished Alumnus (posthumous) of the College of Veterinary Medicine.

From a passion for the care and wellbeing of native Ohio wildlife, Dr. Don Burton founded and directed the Ohio Wildlife Center (OWC). Today, the OWC is one of the country’s largest and most respected wildlife organizations dedicated to fostering awareness and appreciation of Ohio’s wildlife through clinical care, rehabilitation, education, and wildlife health studies. His work fundamentally impacted the way that the native wildlife population is viewed and cared for in central Ohio and beyond.

Don completed his BS (1975), MS (1979), and DVM (1980) at The Ohio State University. During his early years in practice as a practitioner for small animal, avian, and exotic pets, Don began to address a vital need in Ohio to provide a place where injured wildlife could be brought, cared for, and in many cases released back into the environment. OWC now encompasses a wildlife hospital that supports nearly 5,000 animals per year, a nature education center, pre-release facilities, and a staff of over 200 employees and volunteers. Last year, the OWC also responded to over 12,000 wildlife questions and issues through a hotline service and reached over 110,000 Ohioans through conservation education programs.

Don was also committed to One Health. He appreciated the mutual benefit of the human-animal bond, but also the need to address potential conflicts as the worlds of people and wildlife become inexorably and progressively connected. Don developed SCRAM!, an innovative non-lethal wildlife control service to help solve these human-wildlife conflicts.

As an adjunct professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine, Don taught courses in wildlife diseases and ecology and mentored numerous pre-vet and veterinary students. He gained national and international recognition as he contributed many lectures at veterinary conferences, rehabilitation associations, and Humane Society meetings.

Don was also a philanthropist. He donated more than 1000 hours each year to the OWC and to the care and treatment of the thousands of wild animals that came to his practice. His passion to improve the lives of wildlife continues to inspire many more to support the OWC with their time, energy, and finances.

Don’s work is best summed up by his own words: “My work has not been for recognition. It comes from a heartfelt passion to make a difference for wildlife to give native wildlife a voice.”