

Committed to Community

Richmond Road Veterinary Clinic has found that the more you give, the more you get.



By Maureen McKinney

Businesses that give back to their community reap rewards far beyond the satisfaction that comes from helping others. Community involvement also increases public recognition, trust and patronage. Just ask Kevin Smith, DVM, owner of Richmond Road Veterinary Clinic and Tates Creek Animal Hospital in Lexington, Ky.

Smith sees patients at Richmond Road, a full-service hospital he bought nearly a decade ago. He has made it a priority to give back to the community, and it's paying him back in a number of ways.

Q: Why is community involvement so important?

A: We're happy to be involved in anything pet-related that shows the community that we are part of it. Being involved allows people to get to know our team, and they get the sense that our community matters to us as much as it does to them. That's especially important in veterinary medicine, with so many practices being bought out by corporations that don't have a feel for what's happening locally.

Q: How did Richmond Road become the official adoption sponsor of the Lexington Humane Society (LHS)?

A: The practice saw many LHS patients over the years, but we weren't involved in any official capacity until about five years ago. Now, we do whatever we can to help put pets in loving homes, such as donating money and supplies, fundraising and sponsoring annual events.

We also collaborate with LHS on social media, sharing photos and descriptions of adoptable pets on our pages. They have been very good to us as well; they promote our practice, and many of our patients were adopted from there. Every new adoptee receives a complimentary wellness visit so we can ensure proper care starts right away.

Q: What has been your biggest community effort to date?

A: We had been researching ways to work with our local Make-A-Wish

chapter, and when we found out last year that they were helping children and families whose request was to get a dog and be able to care for the dog, we knew we had to get involved. So, we asked pet owners to fundraise by creating an online page for their pets where people could vote—by way of donations—for the pet they thought was the most adorable. Not only were those donations put toward our “Wags to Wishes” fund, but we sold a 2022 wall calendar featuring the 13 pets that received the highest total donations, with those proceeds also going toward the fund.

Q: How much were you able to raise?

A: We were able to donate more than \$14,500 to help grant a pet wish and provide a child with a true companion. I think folks had a lot of fun with it—promoting their pets all over social media, reading about them online, and having friends and family vote for them. ▶



“We're happy to be involved in anything pet-related that shows the community that we are part of it.”

– Kevin Smith, DVM



Team members plus some two- and four-legged friends participate in a Lexington Humane Society community event spotlighting pet adoption.



The clinic often partners with local media companies to promote pet contests and increase brand awareness.

WHAT TO DO NOW



Left: University of Kentucky basketball star Davion Mintz poses with his French bulldog Ghost in a Richmond Road TV commercial that celebrates the human-animal bond. Above: A social media post highlights pet adoption.

GET INVOLVED!

If you would like to identify pet-related organizations that share your clinic's passion for pets, Dr. Smith recommends:

- Sponsor a local event and attend the event to network.
- Match donations from your clients and/or employees for a pet welfare organization.
- Set up booths at existing pet events to conduct contests, meet pet owners and promote the practice.

Q: How did you publicly promote the human-animal bond?

A: A number of our clients are University of Kentucky student athletes or their families. One of those is star basketball player Davion Mintz, whose therapy dog Ghost lives with him in the basketball dorm. And while Ghost may be Davion's therapy dog, Davion treats him like a son.

When we found out about the new NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] policy permitting college athletes to profit from their name, image and likeness, we asked Davion if we could sign him and Ghost to promote their remarkable relationship. Davion has been thrust into the spotlight, which can be a scary place for such a young man, but he has Ghost to comfort him. There are millions of people out in the world who need the exact same thing, and their pets are there every day to do just that.

He agreed to our proposal, and we recently shot a commercial with Davion and Ghost where the pair officially sign with Richmond

Road as their pet care provider, with Ghost signing as our official spokesdog. (View the commercial at <https://bit.ly/3lp1IXe>)

Q: How did you create the commercial?

A: Collaborating with a local video production company specializing in promoting athletes, we created 30-second and 45-second videos to air on television and on social media. To date, the video has more than 100,000 views. Our social media following grew as a result, and we increased brand awareness throughout Central Kentucky and beyond our core service area.

Q: How do your community efforts help your hospital?

A: It gets our name out there, and with so much competition from other area clinics, that has been absolutely huge. It helps people realize that we're just not some faceless business that cares only about profits. We want to be known as a business that cares about the pets, people and community we serve, and I think people see that. ■

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