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King of Spays – Living a Vision

Volunteer Profile of Dr. Byron Maas

LIKE MOST NEBRASKA FARMERS in the 1980s, Byron Maas's world revolved around cattle and crops. But he also had a vision that reached far beyond his family's farm. He wanted to help preserve animals on a global scale. "I had studied zoology in college, and I was interested in doing something to save endangered species," Maas said. "I wanted to use the farm for breeding animals to create a better gene pool—and then return them to the wild and or to a game preserve."

His family didn't share his global enthusiasm, so Maas set out to bolster his knowledge of animals and to attend vet school. He moved to Seattle, where several part-time jobs provided the experience of a lifetime. He worked in animal control and at vet

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clinics and emergency rooms. He cleaned hippo pools at the zoo, worked with vampire bats and porcupines and ended up as an animal tech in the zoo's medical unit.

In 1985, Maas entered the vet school at Washington State University in Pullman, where he studied exotic medicine. But he didn't care for the politics of many zoo settings so he went into veterinary practice, James Herriot-style. "I worked in the small community of Monmouth and did emergency calls on cattle, horses, llamas—and also dogs and cats," he said. "It became too difficult to do it all so I started focusing on small animals."

Maas moved to Central Oregon to start a private practice in 1991, but he never abandoned his vision of helping animals around the world. The only thing that changed was his empha-

sis. Instead of breeding endangered species, he worked to prevent overpopulation of cats and dogs. That overpopulation not only leads to euthanasia, he said. "[It] impacts everyone, including humans and native species."

On his vacations, Maas runs spay and neuter clinics in the South Pacific, French Polynesia and the Galapagos Islands. In Central Oregon, he has volunteered his time for numerous years at animal welfare organizations.

Last year, at the age of 45, he left his veterinary practice to work full-time for nonprofit groups such as the Bend Spay & Neuter Project and the Central Oregon Humane Society. "Although it means a cut in pay, my interests and abilities have always been in pro bono work." Maas said. "I feel that money shouldn't be the deciding factor in providing quality care to animals."



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