

May 22, 2026

VET TECH FRIDAYS

Knowledge, News, and Updates



Meet the Faculty

Julie Hix, BA, AAS, RVT



Mrs. Hix earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Butler University before gaining hands-on experience in a small veterinary clinic. Encouraged to further her education, she pursued an Associate Degree in Veterinary Technology at Purdue University. Her career has spanned diverse settings, including Oklahoma State University, where she served as the Head Small Animal Medicine Technician, instructing veterinary students and managing the small animal medicine section. She has also worked in emergency and critical care at the Animal Emergency and Referral Center in Milwaukee, private practice, and, ultimately, in veterinary technology education.

Now in her 17th year of teaching at Vet Tech Institute of Indiana, Mrs. Hix spent 10 years at the Fort Wayne campus before transitioning to the Indianapolis location, where she has been teaching for the past six years.

Mrs. Hix is married and has three stepchildren, one son, and two grandsons. She resides on a farm alongside Holstein steers, chickens, several cats, a mini pig, and even a few unexpected barn residents, including raccoons and a possum. Passionate about wildlife conservation, she serves as a board member for the Cheetah Conservation Fund, an organization dedicated to preventing the extinction of these remarkable animals.

Student of the Week

Mara Porter

This week's Student of the Week is Mara Porter from the 11DV25 cohort!

Mara has made a lasting impression on both her instructors and classmates through her positivity, professionalism, and dedication to the veterinary technology program. Faculty members consistently describe her as welcoming, respectful, hardworking, and genuinely excited to learn.



One instructor shared that Mara has been especially supportive and open-minded while helping kennel operations run smoothly, noting that her calm and positive demeanor plays a major role in creating a successful environment. Others highlighted how attentive and engaged she is during lecture, as well as the kindness and encouragement she shows to the people around her.

Whether she is participating in class discussions, helping support her classmates, or simply bringing a friendly attitude into the hallway each day, Mara represents the kind of compassionate and dependable future veterinary technician that makes the Vet Tech Institute of Indiana community proud.

Congratulations, Mara, and thank you for the positivity and dedication you bring to VTI every day!

Student Voices
Elizabeth (Wade) Short

For many students, starting at Vet Tech Institute of Indiana means adjusting to a completely new routine, new classmates, and often a brand-new living situation. For Elizabeth Wade of the 03DV26 cohort, the transition has come with challenges, growth, and a few surprises along the way.

Elizabeth shared that the first few weeks of the program have gone “surprisingly well.” While she is still figuring out her perfect study habits and time-management strategies, she has already found one simple trick that helps her stay calm during exams: chewing gum.

“When I’m stressed, it distracts my brain just enough to help me focus,” she explained. “It almost slows everything down so I can think more clearly.”

Although every day at VTI feels familiar while still bringing something new, Elizabeth says the hardest adjustment has been living on her own for the first time, especially being away from her dog. Even with those challenges, she has been pleasantly surprised by how smoothly the transition has gone.

“I expected the first few weeks to feel overwhelming with a new school, new home, and new people,” she said. “But everyone has been incredibly kind and welcoming.”

As someone who describes herself as very shy, Elizabeth also shared that VTI has already helped her feel more comfortable being herself.

“I haven’t felt like I need to hide or worry about being judged the way I did in high school,” she said. “That alone has made this transition so much easier.”

Elizabeth’s passion for veterinary medicine started long before college. Her love for animals has been a constant throughout her life, something her family noticed from the very beginning.

“I’ve always wanted to work with animals,” she said. “My mom loves to remind me that I’ve been saying that since I was old enough to talk.”



Now, as she settles into life at VTI, Elizabeth feels confident that she is exactly where she is meant to be and is

**excited to see where
this journey leads
next.**

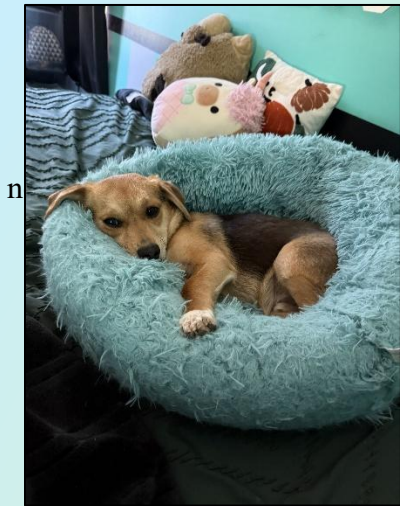
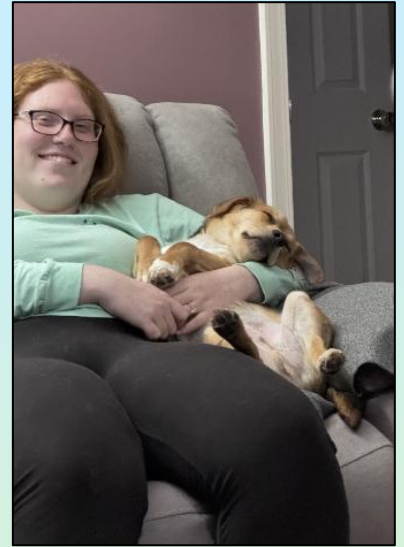
Adoption Spotlight:

Knox

Knox, formerly known as Brian Elliott, while at Vet Tech Institute of Indiana, has officially found his forever home with student Lexi Gregory, and it sounds like he settled in almost immediately.

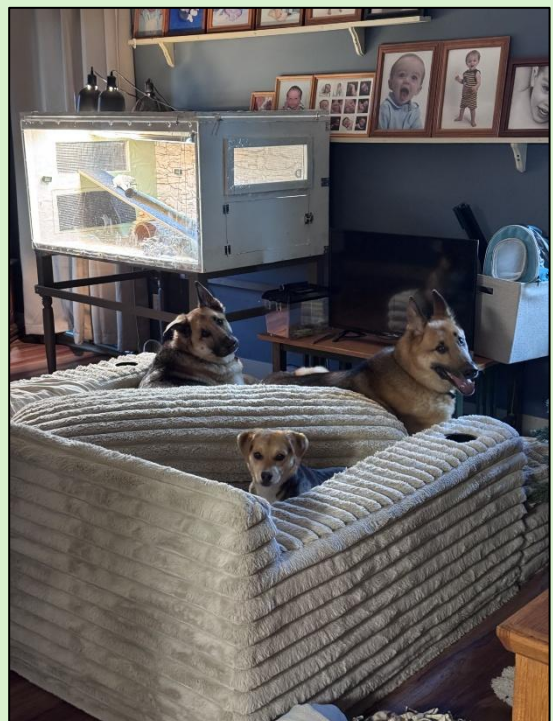
Knox is an 11-month-old beagle mix with a personality that perfectly balances sweet and energetic. According to Lexi, his very first night at home told them everything they needed to know about him. He hopped right up onto the couch as if he had always belonged there. Since then, he has quickly become attached to everyone in the home, including the other dogs.

Like many young dogs, Knox has plenty of energy and keeps his family laughing. One of Lexi's favorite moments so far was watching him get the zoomies and race through every room of the house, bouncing off furniture just to turn himself around faster. But alongside all that excitement, Knox also has a gentle and affectionate side. After one especially playful day, he became so tired that he curled up and fell asleep in Lexi's arms "like a baby," creating a moment she says she will never forget.



Lexi shared that adoption is incredibly important to her because so many animals simply want someone to love them and stand by their side. She hopes others considering adoption remember that fostering can be a great first step, but that sometimes the bond you feel with an animal tells you everything you

Now with a new name, a loving home, and a family that already adores him, Knox's story is a wonderful reminder of just how life-changing adoption can be for both pets and people.



Photos Around Campus



Students furiously taking notes as Mrs. Kleiman dives into the many nuances of equine nutrition. From forage and feed balance to the unique dietary needs of horses, there's much more to horse nutrition than most people realize!

A huge thank you to Mrs. Golden for taking the time to train and support Mrs. Howell as she steps into her new role as Kennel Manager!

Having someone willing to share their knowledge, answer questions, and encourage along the way makes all the difference.



Carolynn Motley spends some advocacy time playing with one of our adorable kittens.

While advocacy and socialization time is an important part of caring for the animals, many students happily spend even more time than required with them... because, let's be honest, they're just too cute not to. For so many of our students, a love for animals is exactly what inspired them to pursue this career in the first place!

Mrs. Howell officially settling into her new office! Complete with plants, cozy touches, and painted portraits of her dog, this space already feels so perfectly "her."



Photos Around Campus



A rare sighting: several VTI instructors gathered in one place at the same time!

Between classes, labs, surgeries, and helping students, catching this many teachers together almost deserves its own candid photo award.



We had some special visitors from Veterinary Emergency Group (VEG) stop by today to speak with our 03DV25 students about what it's like to work in emergency veterinary medicine!

Students got an inside look at the fast-paced world of ER medicine, the teamwork involved, and the unique experiences that come with caring for animals during critical situations. Thank you to the VEG team for sharing your knowledge and experiences with our students!

Somebody please explain how a 5-foot stuffed dog ended up perfectly wedged into this corner.

Honestly, it looks like he's been there for years and has accepted his fate.

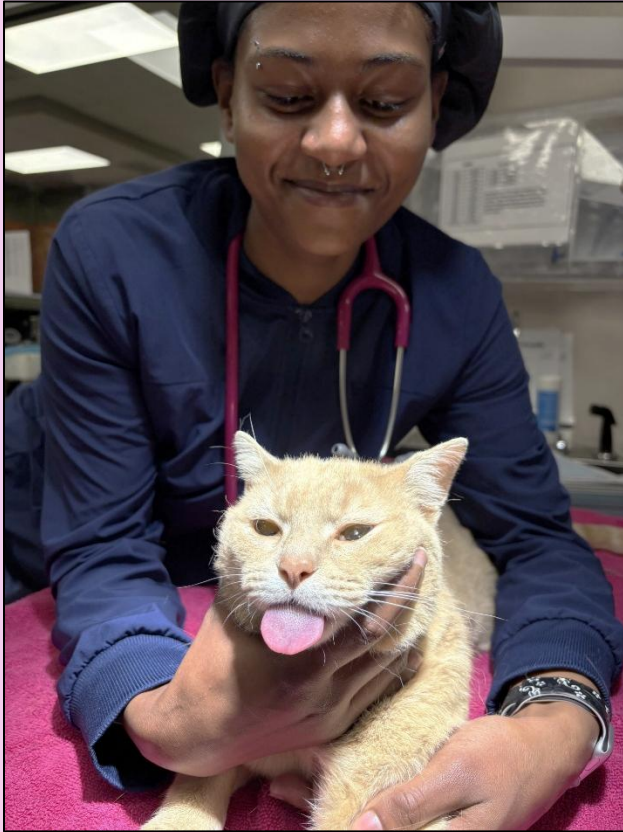
He's actually used as a great learning tool for students practicing restraint techniques, handling skills, and more!



Mrs. Lewis discusses the fascinating process of wound healing with students today. Understanding how the body repairs itself is an important part of veterinary medicine, helping future veterinary technicians recognize healthy healing, prevent complications, and support the best possible patient care.

Surgery Term Photos

03DV25



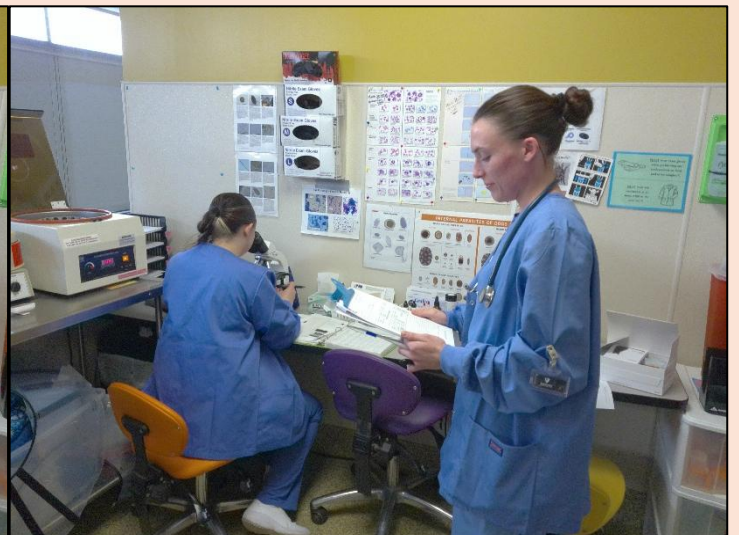
Aarieana Hall gently holds her feline patient prior to his neuter and dental cleaning.

The patient was so relaxed from his sedation that his tiny tongue decided to make a special appearance for the photo.



Mrs. Crocker and Dr. Ritz always keep things rolling in surgery!

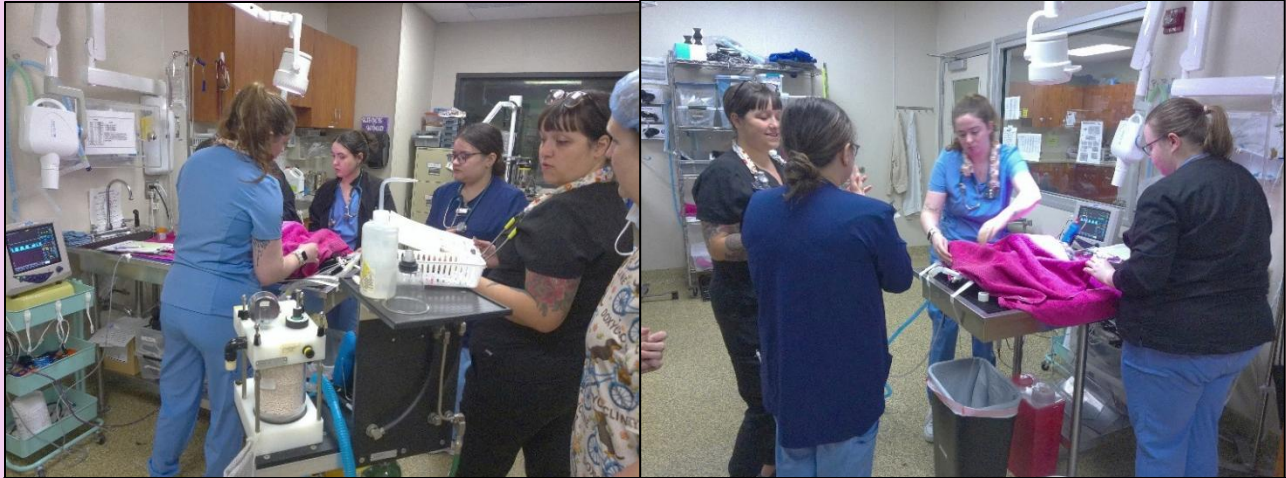
Dr. Ritz's doxycycline dachshund scrubs may be the most vet-tech shirt ever created.



Students Casey Reardon and Liz Dodd are hard at work in the surgery lab, where Liz has just discovered the presence of round worms in a fecal sample.

Surgery Term Photos

03DV25



Students prepare their feline patient for a neuter and dental cleaning while Mrs. Crocker and Dr. Ritz guide them through the process.

Procedures like neuters are incredibly important in veterinary medicine. Neutering helps reduce pet overpopulation, lowers the risk of certain health issues, and can even decrease unwanted behaviors such as roaming or fighting. These hands-on learning experiences help our students understand not only the technical skills involved, but also the lifelong impact veterinary care can have on animal welfare.

Aarieana Hall observes closely and stands at the ready to support her team throughout the procedure. In veterinary medicine, every role in the room matters, and being attentive, prepared, and ready to step in is an important part of providing safe patient care.



Leo Jaramillo carefully monitors anesthesia while Casey Reardon performs an ultrasonic dental scaling on one of our feline patients. Assisting alongside them, Aarieana Hall helps provide visualization during the procedure to ensure every surface of the teeth can be properly cleaned and evaluated.



Tiny Predator, Ancient Survivor: The Overlooked Brilliance of the Dragonfly

Dragonflies are one of those animals people notice for only a few seconds before moving on. They zip past a pond, hover above tall grass, or flash metallic blue and green in the sunlight, and then they're gone. But beneath that brief moment is one of the most remarkable creatures on Earth. Dragonflies are ancient aerial hunters, environmental indicators, and surprisingly important parts of ecosystems almost everywhere freshwater exists.



Long before dinosaurs walked the planet, dragonfly ancestors ruled the skies. Some prehistoric relatives had wingspans over two feet wide, making them some of the largest flying insects to ever exist. Modern dragonflies may be smaller, but they are still incredibly advanced predators. In fact, scientists estimate dragonflies successfully catch their prey more than 90% of the time, making them one of the most efficient hunters in the animal kingdom.

Their flying ability is astonishing. Unlike many insects, dragonflies can move in nearly every direction: forward, backward, sideways, straight up, and even hover like tiny helicopters. Each of their four wings operates independently, giving them an extraordinary level of control in the air. Watching one dart around a pond may seem chaotic, but every movement is precise and calculated.

Dragonflies also have some of the most impressive eyesight in nature. Their enormous compound eyes can contain up to 30,000 individual lenses, allowing them to detect movement from almost every angle around them. They can even see ultraviolet light, helping them locate prey, water sources, and potential mates in ways humans cannot fully imagine.



What many people do not realize is that dragonflies spend most of their lives underwater. Before becoming the winged insects we recognize, they exist as aquatic nymphs, sometimes for years. During this stage, they are fierce underwater predators that feed on mosquito larvae, tadpoles, and even small fish. Once mature, they climb out of the water, split open their exoskeleton, and emerge as flying adults in one of the most incredible transformations in the insect world.

Even their wings are extraordinary. Dragonfly wings are covered in microscopic structures so tiny they cannot be seen by the human eye. These natural nanostructures can actually damage or rupture certain bacteria that land on the wing's surface, helping inhibit bacterial growth. Scientists are now studying dragonfly wings as inspiration for future antibacterial materials that could someday be used in hospitals, surgical tools, and medical devices.

Because dragonflies depend on clean freshwater habitats, they are considered important bioindicators. A healthy dragonfly population often signals a healthy wetland or pond ecosystem. If dragonflies begin disappearing from an area, it can sometimes indicate pollution or environmental imbalance before humans notice other warning signs.

They are also surprisingly beneficial to people. Adult dragonflies consume large numbers of mosquitoes and other flying insects, making them natural pest control specialists. A single dragonfly can eat dozens or even hundreds of mosquitoes in a single day.

Despite all of this, dragonflies rarely receive the same admiration as butterflies, bees, or birds. Maybe it is because they move too quickly for us to fully appreciate, or because many people simply see them as "just another bug." But dragonflies are living pieces of prehistoric history that have survived for hundreds of millions of years while the world around them changed again and again.

The next time one hovers nearby, pauses midair, or lands on a fence post beside you, it is worth taking a closer look. That tiny flash of wings is not just an insect. It is one of nature's oldest and most perfectly engineered hunters.

