



PRESENTED BY **NAVC**
YOUR VETERINARY COMMUNITY



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACTS: Robin Pence | rpence@navc.com | M: +1.352.317.8651
Sherri Kirk | sherri@inspirerprgroup.com | M: +1.614.578.6649

Middle School Students Experience Veterinary Life for a Day with Immersive, Hands-On Learning at World's Largest Veterinary Conference

*Second annual VMX/blendvet event provides opportunity for underrepresented students
to explore a career in one of the least diverse professions*

ORLANDO, FL. – NOV. 28, 2023 – For the second year, the [North American Veterinary Community \(NAVC\)](#) and nationally-recognized veterinary certification program [blendvet](#) will host a full day of hands-on learning for middle school students from underserved communities. The students will learn alongside veterinarians and veterinary nurses/technicians how to examine pets, perform proper animal CPR techniques, suture, and more. The event is in conjunction with the 2024 [Veterinary Meeting & Expo \(VMX\)](#) in Orlando and is sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim, Hill's Pet Nutrition and Merck Animal Health.



Students practice surgery skills at last year's VMX BLEND event.

Veterinary medicine is one of the least diverse fields in America. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 93.3% of veterinarians are white, with as few as 1.2% Black, 4.7% Latinx and 5.6% Asian. Meanwhile, pet ownership is extremely diverse.

“Trust is the foundation of medical care, whether for humans or animals,” said Dr. Niccole Bruno, founder and CEO of blendvet. “When diverse pet owners do not feel heard or connected to their vets, they’re much less likely to trust their advice and get their beloved pets the care they need, making this an extremely impactful issue in veterinary medicine. Through our blendvet pathway programming, especially our partnership with the NAVC, we can open new doors for minority youth to pursue veterinary careers in the years to come.”

“At NAVC, we are committed to opening career opportunities in veterinary medicine for the next generation, especially those underserved youth not well-represented in today’s veterinary industry,” said NAVC CEO Gene O’Neill. “Our partnership with blendvet is crucial to our organization’s efforts to support and promote DEI in our industry and is especially impactful at VMX, where we can introduce so many veterinary professionals to the blendvet program. We are eager to continue offering opportunities for underrepresented youth to pursue veterinary careers, especially after the success of last year’s blendvet program.”

On Tuesday, January 16, 2024, from 9 a.m.- 4 p.m., blendvet will host more than 50 students at the Hyatt Regency Orlando for “Believe & Belong in Veterinary Medicine.” Led by Dr. Bruno, participating students will learn about the various aspects of veterinary medicine from a diverse group of veterinary experts and try their hand at immersive training experiences such as placing sutures and checking samples under microscopes.

Activities planned for students include:

- Hands-on experience using workshop stations to learn about veterinary surgery, emergency medicine, clinical pathology and preventive care. Students will practice drawing blood using a model in the clinical pathology station, suturing models at the surgery station, performing CPR in the ER station and observing physical examinations.
- An educational station on animal nutrition about obesity and proper nutrition in pets.
- Educational sessions on various topics related to the different pathways in veterinary medicine and a day in the life of a veterinary professional.
- Networking lunch with experts from different areas of veterinary medicine.
- Discuss the next steps for students interested in a veterinary career by providing resources to veterinary summer camps, scholarship programs, in-clinic shadowing and more.

Participants will be presented with a certificate verifying they have earned six hours of education in veterinary medicine.

Students will also be given a list of local veterinarians interested in providing shadowing opportunities to allow them to continue on in the field of veterinary medicine as their education progresses. Following the program, blendvet hosts a parent program virtually to educate parents on the various pathways in veterinary medicine and share resources on the next steps

for their children. The blendvet faculty share their personal stories of resilience and success in veterinary medicine with the support of their families.

In addition to blendvet's primary mission of creating education and training opportunities to inspire future veterinary professionals, another important goal is to make the field of veterinary medicine more inclusive through outreach programs. In addition to VMX, blendvet offers pathway programs nationwide with minority students. Previous programs have been held in Nashville, St. Petersburg and San Diego. Through its partnership with NAVC, blendvet will expand to other communities in 2024.

**To register and learn more about blendvet's event at VMX, visit www.blend.vet.
Registration for blendvet closes on December 15, 2023.**

Photos and interviews are available. The B-roll from the 2023 blendvet event can be found [here](#).

About the NAVC

The North American Veterinary Community (NAVC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting and advancing veterinary professionals worldwide. The world's leading provider of veterinary continuing education, NAVC delivers essential training, tools and resources for veterinary professionals to stay abreast of advances in animal medicine and provide the best medical care for animals everywhere. Through its commitment to innovation and excellence, the NAVC has developed a diverse portfolio of products and services, including educational events, headlined by VMX, the world's largest, most comprehensive continuing education conference and launchpad for new products and innovations within the veterinary industry; a robust digital platform for virtual learning and engagement; the veterinary industry's largest and award-winning portfolio of trade publications; and an advocacy arm which unites the veterinary community and pet lovers. The NAVC was founded in 1982 and is headquartered in Orlando, FL. Since 2017, the NAVC has been recognized as one of the Top Workplaces by the Orlando Sentinel. To learn more about the NAVC's products and brands, visit <https://navc.com>. To see our schedule of upcoming events, visit <https://navc.com/calendar/>.

About blendvet

blendvet is a veterinary certification program in diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). It is founded, owned and backed by a diverse group of leaders in veterinary medicine. blendvet is the first program designed to create an inclusive workplace culture geared toward fostering environments of belonging for teams and clients and creating the next generation of diverse veterinary professionals through student and parent programming.

###