



January 8, 2024

***** MEDIA ADVISORY *****

LOCAL ORLANDO MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS SCRUB IN AS ANIMAL DOCS FOR A DAY AT WORLD'S LARGEST VETERINARY CONFERENCE

What: Middle school students from underserved communities in Central Florida will participate in a full day of immersive, hands-on training alongside veterinarians and veterinary nurses/technicians at the world's largest veterinary conference, VMX 2024. During the second annual Believe & Belong in Veterinary Medicine (blendVET) event to be held at VMX, more than 60 students will learn how to examine pets, perform physical exams, read and use X-rays for diagnostics, measure food appropriately for sound nutrition, care for ZooMed animals, exotic species and more.

- Students will gain experience utilizing immersive workshop stations to learn about emergency medicine, general practice, surgery, clinical pathology, nutrition, exotic and zoological medicine.
- **Great visuals include students in scrubs placing sutures and bandages, checking samples under microscopes and performing proper animal CPR techniques.**
- A special program will be concurrently offered for parents and guardians to learn about the commitment required and how to support their child in pursuing a veterinary career. A virtual option will also be provided for parents following the event.

The event is sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim, Hill's Pet Nutrition and VCA.

Who: Interviews will be available with NAVC executives, blendVET leadership and presenters, including:

- Niccole Bruno, DVM, CEO and founder of blendVET
- Dana Varble, DVM, CAE, NAVC Chief Veterinary Officer
- Kenneth Pierce, DVM, DAVCO
- Valerie Marcano, DVM, PhD, DACPV
- Various student participants, parents and guardians

Opportunities for photos and b-roll will be available throughout the program.

B-roll from the 2023 Believe & Belong in Veterinary Medicine event can be found [here](#).

When/Where: Tuesday, Jan. 16, from 9 a.m.- 4 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Orlando

Programming includes:

- 8:30 – 9 a.m. **Student Registration**
- 9 – 9:20 a.m. **Welcome** from *Niccole Bruno, DVM, founder and CEO of blendVET, and Dana Varble DVM & NAVC*
- 9:20 – 9:50 a.m. **“VET Talk”** from *Kenneth Pierce, DVM, DAVCO*
- 10 a.m. – 12:25 p.m. **Immersion Station Rotations**
- 12:30 – 1:15 p.m. Lunch & **“VET talk”** from *Valerie Marcano, DVM, PhD, DACPV*
- 1:15 – 2:50 p.m. **Immersion Station Rotations**
- 3 – 3:30 p.m. **Q&A** with *Faculty & Volunteers*
- 3:30 – 4 p.m. **Closing Ceremony**
- 4 – 4:30 p.m. **Ice Cream/Dessert Social**

Why: Veterinary medicine is one of the least diverse fields in America. According to the 2021 U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics report, 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.

“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.”

Students will be presented with a certificate verifying they have earned seven hours of education in veterinary medicine. Participants will also be provided with a list of resources of local veterinarians interested in providing shadowing experiences, scholarships and summer opportunities to allow them to continue into the field of veterinary medicine as their education progresses.

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 that fosters environments of belonging for teams and clients and creates the next generation of diverse veterinary professionals through student and parent programming.

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Media Relations Contact:

Sherri Kirk

sherri@inspireprgroup.com

M: +1.614.578.6649