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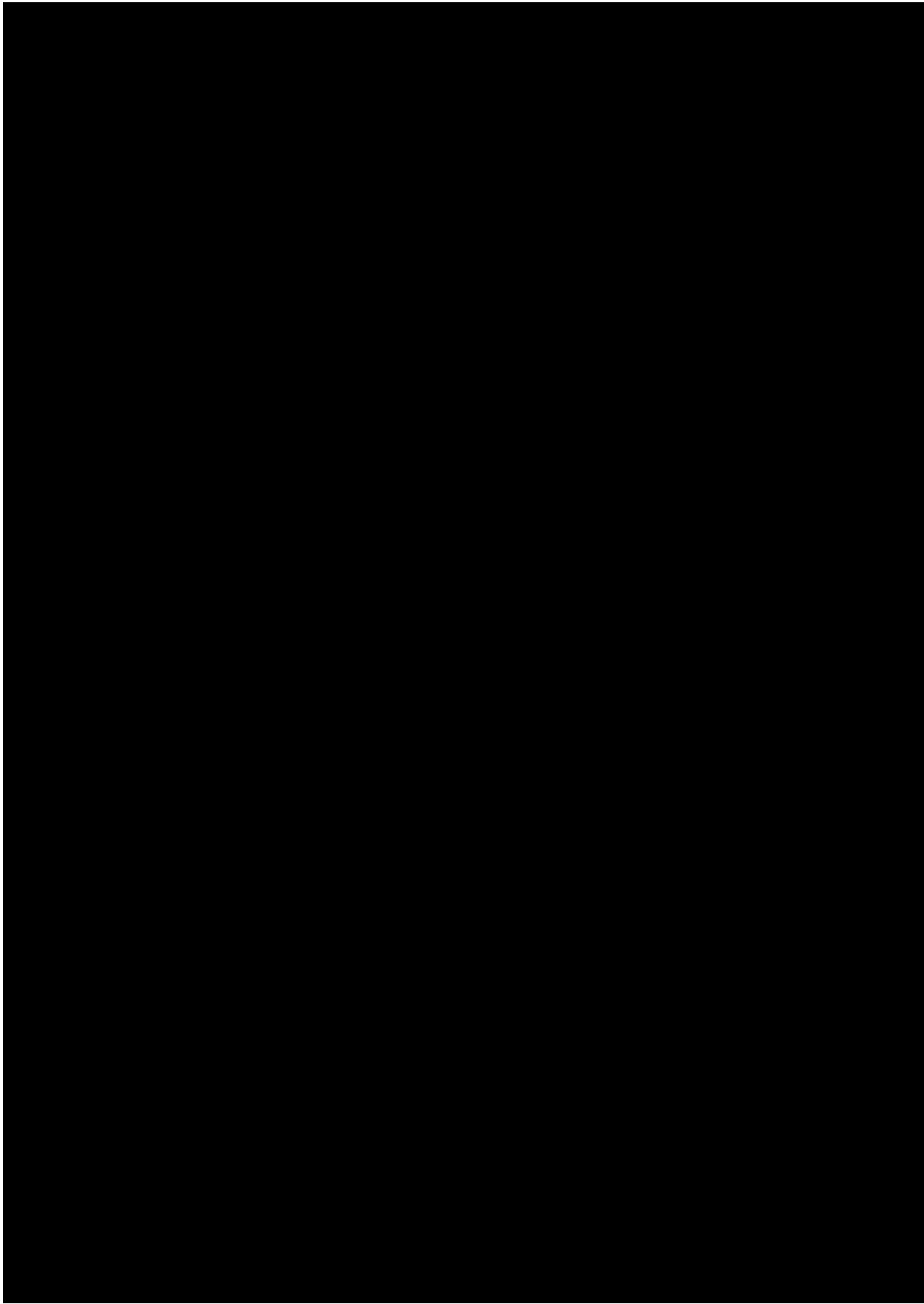
Orlando Middle School Students Scrubbed In As Vets for a Day at the World's Largest, Most Comprehensive Veterinary Conference

Second annual VMX/blendVET event provided an opportunity for underrepresented students to experience immersive, hands-on learning alongside veterinary medicine industry experts

(Click to download [photos](#) and [b-roll](#) from the event.)

ORLANDO, FL – Jan. 16, 2024 – On the heels of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the [North American Veterinary Community \(NAVC\)](#) and nationally-recognized veterinary certification program [blendVET](#) hosted some 80 middle school students from underserved communities in central Florida for a full day of hands-on learning at the 41st [Veterinary Meeting and Expo](#), VMX 2024. The students enjoyed a day full of immersive activities alongside veterinarians and veterinary nurses/technicians.

Veterinary medicine is one of the least diverse fields in America. Data from 2021 shows 93.3% of veterinarians are white, with as few as 1.2% Black, 4.7% Latinx and 5.6% Asian.



Students practice suturing skills at VMX 2024's blendVET event.

“We’re proud to have partnered with blendVET again for this wonderful annual event that inspires and opens doors for young people to explore career opportunities in veterinary medicine, especially those underserved and not well-represented in today’s veterinary industry,” said NAVC CEO Gene O’Neill. “The NAVC looks forward to continuing to offer opportunities for underrepresented youth to pursue veterinary careers, especially after the continual success of the yearly event.”

“Our annual event is extremely important to realizing more diversity in our field,” said Dr. Niccole Bruno, founder and CEO of blendVET. “Giving back to the community has always been important to me, especially in the form of mentorship. This profession has been a big part of my life since I was 12 years old, and I enjoy engaging students, typically those underrepresented in veterinary medicine. It’s rewarding to be able to show them what this field entails and the opportunities available to them. For the second year in a row, our blend pathway program has opened new doors for underserved youth to pursue veterinary careers in the years to come.”

The students learned about the various aspects of veterinary medicine from a diverse group of veterinary experts while wearing surgical gowns of their own and tried their hand at immersive training experiences such as suturing models at the surgery station, performing CPR at the ER stations, observing physical examinations and checking samples under microscopes. Sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim, Hill’s Pet Nutrition and VCA, the “Believe & Belong in Veterinary Medicine” interactive workshops were led by a diverse group of veterinary professionals including:

- Niccole Bruno, DVM, CEO and founder of blendVET
- Kenneth Pierce, DVM, DAVCO
- Valerie Marcano, DVM, PhD, DACPV

Participants were presented with a certificate verifying they earned seven hours of education in veterinary medicine. The students were also given a list of local veterinarians interested in providing shadowing opportunities to allow them to continue in the field of veterinary medicine as their education progresses.

In concert with the student programming, blendVET hosted a parent program to educate parents on the various pathways in veterinary medicine and shared resources on the next steps for their children. The blendVET faculty shared personal stories of resilience and success in veterinary medicine with the support of their families.

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.

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