



Photos by TIM MC CARTHY/Staff Photographer

**Dr. Jeanmary Oberg (left) talks with Annette Urban and her son Billy after treating Socks, a Pekingese. The animal motif on the counter front is of past and present pets. The black paw prints on the floor lead to examining rooms.**

# A Family Affair

*Animal Hospital  
of North Dover  
treats pets and  
is a treat for children*



By **TAMMY MCKILLIP**  
CORRESPONDENT

**T**he Animal Hospital of North Dover may be state-of-the-art in terms of technology and veterinary medicine, but Dr. Jean Oberg of Toms River, says that down-home friendliness and the desire to educate pet owners about their pets is what makes her facility so special.

"I wanted the reception room to be very child-friendly," says Oberg, who opened her animal hospital three months ago and included a miniature play veterinary hospital for kids in the waiting room, complete with stethoscopes, toy syringes and a bin full of stuffed animals.

"They have real scrubs, real surgical gowns that they can put on, business cards, caps and masks," she says. "I ordered special powderless surgical gloves just for them so that they wouldn't get the powder on their hands and then touch their face or mouth. I give a new cap and mask to each kid so they can play animal doctor."

Oberg, who ran a mobile veterinary clinic in the Freehold/Manalapan area for several years before moving to Dover Township, says her love of animals and children — in particular, her 4-year-old son Walter — was the motivation for her office's motif.

"All of our clocks bark," says Oberg, pointing to several grandfather-style clocks that have dogs in place of numbers. "Every morning, we set out cookies, cakes, bagels and coffee in the reception area, and our cookie box plays the theme to 'Green Acres.'"

A set of black paw prints painted on the floor leads clients to one of two examination rooms, and tiny cartoon mice peek out from their painted mouse holes along the baseboards.



**Groomer Jamie Koskowski (above) laughs after getting a "kiss" from her client. Oberg (left) treats Socks.**

With the help of a local artist, Oberg created murals representing "past and present pets" — a Newfoundland named Sheeba, a 15-year-old poodle, Smokey the house cat, Oberg's first dog Rufus and three ferrets belonging to the hospital's computer support man — across the reception desk and waiting area of the hospital.

"All the pets here mean something," says Oberg, of the mural. "They were either my or my staffs or clients' kittens, dogs, ferrets or bunnies growing up."

"We're using them as an educational tool," she says, pointing to the tail-less cat named Squeak perched at the top of a cartoon tree. "He belonged to my hospital manager, Suzie Raabe. He was rescued from inside a car

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where he was stuck in a fan belt and had to get his tail amputated to save his life."

The name Encore is stenciled underneath a smiling red Doberman pinscher. "Encore was a dog that I had that had a type of cancer called osteosarcoma," says Oberg. "He had to have his leg amputated, and he only lived about six months after that, but the experience taught me a lot. People ask me how a three-legged animal functions. They want to know if they can run. I have videos here of him running and fetching, and I can show people that it is a quality life, but not a long life, when your dog has osteosarcoma. I use him as a teaching tool."

Educating pet owners about their pets' illnesses and treatments is a top priority for Oberg.

"We're always giving them something they can take home," she says. "Our hospital staff prides itself on having pamphlets on every kind of ailment that there is. A lot of times when people visit a vet, they go home and somebody asks them, 'Well, what did the vet say?' And they'll say, 'I don't know. He's got a skin condition or something.' When we make a diagnosis here we have every disease linked in a computer program and we send the client home with information. We also have print outs of possible drug interactions — just like the kind you get when you buy a drug at the pharmacy. They always leave here with an educational tool. We try to make sure they un-

derstand what they're treating."

Pets that are admitted for dentistry even receive report cards with grades.

"For every A," says Oberg, "it says to give your pet a special treat. For every B, you have to give it a special hug. For every C, you give it an extra pat. For every D, you tell your pet you love him anyway, and for every F, you give yourself a treat for loving it anyway. We also give pets a report card for when they're boarded and for grooming. If they have surgery, they get a discharge summary saying exactly what they need to do when they go home."

Although the hospital is run with a sense of fun and humor, when it comes to medicine, Oberg is serious about her operation. She has invested in the newest surgical technology and her ICU unit is filled with expensive "gadgets" that she enjoys showing off. She regularly takes clients into the mysterious "back room" to give them a tour and show them exactly what happens there when their pets are undergoing a surgical procedure.

"A lot of people say to me 'Wow! It looks like a human hospital.' And it is, really. Same medicine. Same stuff," she says, pointing out two oxygen hoses hanging from the ceiling and a cardiac monitor that measures heart rate, pulse, respiration, temperature and oxygen saturation levels in the animal's blood stream during surgery.

Another benefit that Oberg is proud to provide her clients is what she calls "one-stop shopping." One corner of the hospital's large reception area is stocked with pet products — everything from specially for-

mulated "prescription" pet foods to children's toys — Animal Doctor Barbie, a vet medical kit and a pet-grooming kit — that are related to veterinary medicine.

"I wanted to show children about animal husbandry," she says, "to teach them at a young age about loving and caring for pets."

Pointing to a grooming area equipped with rubberized retractable stairs that larger dogs can use to walk themselves into the tub, Oberg says "We try to offer a little bit of everything. You can get bandages here. You can get your pet supplies. You can even get your pet groomed after he visits the vet. You don't have to go to five different places. It's an 'all-in-one.'"

Oberg says the sign above her reception area best explains her hospital's philosophy. It reads: "Welcome. Treating the best with the best." "It's how we feel," she says. "The patients are the best, and we want to give them the best care."