

OUT DL: deny laughing DMTFB: dramatic antics think in parallel gutters DYTADIK: but what the heck do I know C&G: chuckle & grin CID: crying in disgrace CUL: see you later **YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR KIDS ARE SAYING ONLINE.** CYO: see you online DBA: doing business as usual DL: dead link DLTBBB: don't let the bed bugs bite DIKU: do I know you? EMFBI: excuse me for butting in F2F: face to face FC: fingers crossed FISH: first in, still here FMTYEWTK: far more than you ever wanted to know FOMCI: falling off my chair laughing FTRBMH: from the bottom of my heart FIID:

Top dog care

BY EMILY MATCHAR, Staff Writer

Officer Jeremy Burgin could tell that something wasn't right with his partner. He didn't whine when Burgin picked up his police radio. He didn't stand up and stick out his tongue when Burgin returned to the car. But when he didn't want to play ball after their shift was done, Burgin knew for sure there was something wrong with his partner, Max, the German shepherd who comprises the dog half of the town's canine unit.

What do you do with a German shepherd who's seriously sick on the day before Christmas Eve in Cary?

Burgin rushed Max to Veterinary Specialty Hospital of the Carolinas, where veterinary surgeon Cindy Eward put Max under general anaesthesia, opened his abdominal cavity and removed a silver-dollar sized rubber object that was blocking his small intestine.

Max was one lucky dog.

Burgin and Max have been working together since summer of 2005, sniffing out drugs and weapons and suspects. On a recent call, Max took mere seconds to sniff out some shell casings that human officers had just spent 15 minutes looking for.

"We do it faster and we do it better when we use Max," Burgin said.

Recognizing the important of police K9 units and wanting to give back to the community, the Veterinary Specialty Hospital offered to donate \$5,000 worth of service yearly in case Max should need their assistance.

While there are numerous veterinary practices in Cary, including the Mayfair Animal Hospital, which provides Max's regular care free of charge, VSH has some equipment and services that make it seem at times more like a "people hospital."

On a recent Thursday afternoon at VSH, hospital director Kevin Concannon paused outside the orthopedics operating room to watch through the window as surgeon Gary Spodnick repaired the knee of a 7-year-old bulldog-rottweiler mix. The dog's right hind leg was flayed open, a newly installed metal plate visible as a surgical resident closed up layers of tissue with a hooked needle.

Outside, two veterinary technicians in blue scrubs anesthetized a white maltese with an abnormal tongue growth. The dog lay on its side, the snowy fur around its mouth dyed yellow with betadine antiseptic.

The Maltese had already seen one of the hospital's oncologists, who deemed the growth potentially cancerous.

Of the 7,000 or so animals the hospital sees yearly, Concannon estimated that 15 percent are oncology patients. Of those, about two-thirds end up receiving chemotherapy, he said. In the chemotherapy treatment room, a cork board is full of cards from pleased pet owners — one has a photograph of a small dog wearing a T-shirt that says "I survived cancer camp at VSH."

VSH is the only place other than the N.C. State University College of Veterinary Medicine that has a linear accelerator, a massive piece of equipment for delivering radiation therapy to cancer patients.

Just like at a people hospital.

And just like at Duke and Rex and UNC and WakeMed, when a patient comes in to VSH late at night with a serious illness or injury, an on-call surgeon will show up to take care of him.

That's exactly what happened with Max. His regular vet at the Mayfair Animal Hospital referred him to on-call surgeon Eward at VSH, who drove in from Durham. On Christmas Eve. While eight months pregnant.

The object in Max's stomach? A piece of a Kong, a tough rubber chew toy that Burgin uses as a training

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aid and Max loves to tear apart with his ultrastrong jaws.

Concannon says that swallowing bits of chew toys is “not uncommon” for dogs and that if left untreated, the intestinal blockage could have killed Max.

Despite 15 stitches, Max was home later the same day, being watched over closely by Burgin and his wife Heather, a veterinary technician.

He spent the next day, Christmas, with Burgin and family visiting their parents in Salisbury and Greensboro, and was back at work the next week without missing a single day.

“Dogs are very stoic,” said Burgin. “They just want to be with their handlers. They want to work.”

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