

# Smart Start

*Thanks to some high-tech equipment, Ridgewater veterinary technology students are getting in-depth training on emerging surgical procedures.*

When veterinary technician students from Ridgewater College start their careers, many will work with veterinarians who do laser surgery for declawing cats. Thanks to the efforts of Veterinary Technology Instructor Dr. Al Balay, Ridgewater students can observe the surgery first-hand.

This winter the college acquired the laser surgery equipment used for declawing cats. Now students taking the required course on surgical nursing and anesthesia can observe the technology during surgery. They also learn how to clean and calibrate the equipment, tasks that would be part of their jobs in a clinic.

And it's not only the students who benefit from the new equipment. The cats also are far better off when their claws are removed by a laser instead of a scalpel. "I have been aware for many years that there is a lot of concern that declawing is a painful procedure," says Balay, an experienced veterinarian who has taught at Ridgewater for 13 years. "Within the last five to 10 years, it's become evident that there are many advantages to laser surgery."

For one, it causes less pain and bleeding for the cats. That's because the laser beam seals nerve endings and causes less hemorrhaging than the standard techniques. Cats also generally recover from laser declawing much faster, Balay adds.

Balay was able to buy the equipment by securing a federal Perkins Improvement Grant to cover nearly \$14,000 of the \$23,000 cost. The rest of the funding came from Ridgewater. These are well-spent dollars, he notes, because the laser equipment makes Ridgewater the only public school in the state to offer training in laser surgery to its vet tech students. And with 18 percent of all clinics in Minnesota now using laser surgery, students will need to know how to handle the equipment.

"This is something we chose to go after because it was the right thing to teach our students," adds Balay. "But it also helps us to stay on the cutting edge."

—Suzy Frisch



MARK PETERSON

Veterinary Technology Instructor Dr. Allen Balay demonstrates the laser-declawing technique.

## Attention Ridgewater Alumni! We want to keep in touch with you.

The Ridgewater College Foundation is trying to locate as many of its alumni as possible. If you are a graduate of our college, we hope you will take a few moments to complete our Alumni Profile Update online at [www.ridgewater.edu](http://www.ridgewater.edu) or fill out the information requested on this page and mail to:

**Ridgewater College Foundation**  
**P.O. Box 1097**  
**Willmar, MN 56201**

The information you provide will be made available to classmates planning reunions or just wanting to stay in touch. Ridgewater College and the Ridgewater College Foundation office will also use the information to keep you informed of special events and opportunities at the college.

Although you may have graduated from Hutchinson Technical College, Willmar Technical College, or Willmar Community College before we merged, you are still Ridgewater College alumni. We are eager to connect with you, and are excited to tell you about the great things happening at your alma mater!

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\*Birthdate or SSN \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Graduated? Y N Year Graduated \_\_\_\_\_

Program Attended \_\_\_\_\_ Years Attended \_\_\_\_\_

Is your spouse a graduate of Ridgewater? Y N Year Graduated \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Program \_\_\_\_\_

To avoid duplication of information, please list others in your household who can be combined with your address.

Other \_\_\_\_\_ Year Graduated \_\_\_\_\_

\*Ridgewater is asking for information that is private and/or confidential, which you are not required to provide under state/federal law.