Gerald Greer of the Blair School of Music and Scott Hoffman, M.D., medical director of VUH Operating Rooms, relax at home with Scooby, Ruby and Sunny

Pets of Vanderbilt 2012

- Vote for Vanderbilt’s Dog and Cat of the Year
- On the trail with search and rescue dogs
- A household with 20 (!) dogs
Big love
Scott Hoffman has a houseful of 20 dogs. He’s trying to find homes for dozens more.

BY WAYNE WOOD
Walk into Scott Hoffman, M.D.’s office, and it’s clear you are in the domain of a dog lover. There are photographs of dogs framed and displayed on shelves, and hanging on the wall. There is other dog artwork: some drawings, a woodcarving, even a dog’s image rendered in copper.

Hoffman has known the heights of the dog show world. His bullmastiff Liam won Best in Breed twice at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show at Madison Square Garden in New York.

But as impressive an achievement as that is, Hoffman, associate professor of Clinical Anesthesiology and medical director of VUH operating rooms, says his true passion is in rescuing dogs and finding them homes. He and his partner Gerald Greer, adjunct artist teacher of violin at the Blair School of Music and associate concertmaster of the Nashville Symphony Orchestra, have opened their Franklin home to 20 (!) dogs (most of them bullmastiffs, but also some others, including French bulldogs), and helped find homes for 50 more dogs in the past year. They even founded a rescue organization, a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) for bullmastiffs, www.bullmastiffrescuers.org.

More than a ton of canines
A household with 20 dogs—some live in the house, some in a kennel back of the house, all get to run in the yard—requires some carefully thought out living arrangements. In order to keep that many dogs fed and exercised and cleaned up after, Hoffman and Greer have a household employee, a “dog nanny,” as he put it, to help. As for the food and vet bills—don’t ask. In the thousands.

But none of the 20 dogs are being continued on page 12
As always, hundred and hundreds of pictures were submitted by Vanderbilt staff and faculty for House Organ’s annual Pets of Vanderbilt feature, a Medical Center tradition.

Finalists in the Dogs, Cats, and Group or Duo categories are published in the following pages.

Many, many more pictures, and a few links to You Tube videos, are featured on the House Organ iPad edition, as well as the House Organ website, www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan/. That is where you will also find the 2012 pet poll, which allows readers to vote for their favorites, one vote per category. The categories and pets in the poll are the same as those in the print version—Dogs, Cats, Groups or Duos.

Unfortunately, we have to also say this: those attempting to circumvent the voting process by automatic votes or other means will be disqualified.

Voting begins at 10 a.m. on Friday, Feb. 3, and concludes at 10 a.m. on Thursday, Feb. 16. Top vote getters in each category will be announced on the House Organ site, and will also be featured in the March 2012 issue.

Vote online for the Vanderbilt Dog, Cat, and Group or Duo of the Year

VOTE!

Misty, taken by Laura Williams, Pediatric Surgery

Rocky, taken by Suryakala Sarilla, Pathology

Mike and Meadow, taken by Kathryn Formichella, Ophthalmology

VOTE!

VOTE!

VOTE!
VOTE!
for your favorite dog

Bonnie, taken by Teri Wedel, Pediatric Emergency Department

Leonardo, taken by Jeannie Tuschi, Center for Science Outreach

Chelsey, taken by Judy Arena, Clinical Nutrition

Bobo, taken by Myke Ondek, Gift Shop

Max, taken by Kasey Joyner, NICU

Mabel, taken by Beth Donaghhey, School of Nursing

Oxford, taken by Shawn Scarbrough, VMG Coding Services
Miss Pickles, taken by Patty Dursprung, Pediatric Anesthesia

Titus Wilhelm Rain, taken by Deb Cunningham, Hospital Administration

Bert, taken by Lisa Boyer, School of Nursing

Zeppelin, taken by Amber Greeno, Pediatric Emergency Department

Bentley and former couch cushion, taken by Melissa Gervase, Pharmacy

Duke, taken by Matthew Bosler, Emergency Medicine

Parker, taken by Beau Kelly, Liver Transplant

vote online at
www.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan
VOTE!
for your favorite cat

Cheddar Louise Meowzlow, taken by Katheryne Martinez, Radiology

Holi, taken by Jana Foster, Vanderbilt Heart and Vascular Institute, Franklin

Hugs, taken by Trish Craft, Graduate Medical Education

Martin, taken by Eugenia M. Yazlovitskaya, Medicine

Skyline, taken by Ed Donnelly, Radiology

Tubbie, taken by Kristen Smith, Allied Health

Sam, taken by Rebecca Thompson, Cell and Developmental Biology
Callie, taken by Deborah S. Cunningham, Hospital Administration

Sushi, taken by Alison R. Miller, Genetic Medicine

Mei-Mei, taken by Vicki Youngblood, Biomedical Research Education and Training

Sophie (by candlelight), taken by Ginger Ketschke, Social Work

Midnight, taken by R. Joel Barnett, Mechanical Engineering

Batman, taken by Bob Wheaton, Environmental Health and Safety

Bailey, taken by Kimberly Tromatore, Health Plus

vote online at
www.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan
VOTE!

for your favorite group or duo

Jazz and Dot, taken by Kelli Boyd, Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology

Saku and Iroha, taken by Louise Warren, 11 North

Zildjian and Steve, taken by Mary Beth Davis, Cardiovascular Medicine

Dan, Sammy and me, entered by Chaochen You, Urologic Surgery

Zoey and her puppy Damien, taken by Laura Williams, Pediatric Surgery

Ivory, April, Brutis and May, taken by Judy Arena, Clinical Nutrition
Dogs experience the world through their noses. With an average of 200 million scent receptors (compared to a measly 5 million in humans), dogs can pick up a scent from a mere handshake and follow trails that are years old.

That was good news for the family of Johnny Hahn, a 9-year-old boy with autism who wandered into the Maury County woods last August. Volunteers had combed the area around his aunt and uncle’s house with no sign of the boy, so the Maury County Sheriff called in Ysella Carrillo, M.D., and her redbone coonhound Mason. Using a pair of shorts the boy had slept in the night before, Mason was able to track down Johnny, who was playing in a creek about a mile from the house he wandered from.

“There were 70 volunteers on foot that preceded us in the search, and Mason was able to filter all that out and find just the one scent trail for the boy,” Carrillo said. “The sun was going down and people were getting worried, and luckily we were able to find him pretty quick.”

Carrillo, assistant professor of Surgery at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, and Erica Woodside, B.S.N., R.N., E.M.T., LifeFlight nurse, are both reserve deputies with the Maury County Sheriff’s Office (complete with shiny silver star-shaped badges) and participate in search and rescue activities with their trained dogs.

Using the dogs’ keen sense of smell and natural desire to track scents, they help find Alzheimer’s patients who wander from home, follow the trail of abducted people or criminals and locate drowning victims.

Amazing noses
“The hounds’ olfactory cells are more dense, and it’s amazing what they can smell. They can track trails that are months or years old or get scent off a piece of clothing the person wore seven or eight years ago,” Carrillo said.

Carrillo has two coonhounds named Mason and Dixon, a German Shepherd named Grizzly and a Belgian Malinois named Cleo, each with their own set of search and rescue strengths.

“Dixon is good for city work because he’s not afraid of noises or trains. Cleo is very obedient and can be let off leash when she’s searching,” she said.

Woodside has two bloodhounds,
The hounds’ olfactory cells are more dense, and it’s amazing what they can smell. They can track trails that are months or years old or get scent off a piece of clothing the person wore seven or eight years ago.

Erica Woodside with her bloodhound Buford.

a male named Buford and female named JC.

“Buford is very mild-mannered and can work some off leash. He’s 110 pounds but thinks he’s a lap dog, so he does very well in a boat. JC is very fast-paced and will barge on through anything, so she’s good in the woods,” Woodside said.

Carillo and Woodside had known each other from working on trauma cases at Vanderbilt but got reacquainted through search and rescue activities and now go on many calls together.

“It’s great having someone like Ysela doing this with me,” Woodside said. “It seems quaint at my age to say this, but she’s my best friend. It’s very nice having someone who has had the same training, knows what to do and is there to back you up.”

Excitement in the air
Both of them started with very active dogs that needed to be stimulated. Now they train six-eight hours every weekend with a group led by Tim and Suzy Perry in Sumner County, a couple nationally known in search and rescue operations. Reputation is important in the field, and both Carrillo and Woodside trained for years before the Maury County Sheriff considered using them.

The dogs live to search, and just putting them in the car or showing them their special work harness elicits excited barks, jumps and tail wags. To signal it is time to work, the handler straddles the dog and puts them in their harness. Then the dog is allowed to smell the area in a process called casting.

“Casting them out gives them an impression in their head. The Perrys taught us that dogs can subtract better than they can add. If they have smelled everything and then you give them a scent, they can tell that that scent isn’t around anymore and go find it,” Woodside explained.

After casting, an object containing the missing person’s scent is clasped over the dog’s nose and the handler gives them audible cues to “Check it” and “Go find it.”

“They can get a scent from just a hair or from a quarter that has been bounced off someone’s clothes. That’s enough contact to get a scent,” Carillo said. “We usually find what we’re looking for. The dogs are tenacious and keep going until they find them.”

One of their busiest periods was the May 2010 flood, as they searched for people swept away by the rushing water, including Danny Tomlinson, who was missing for months.

“That was our most disappointing search. We spent many weekends looking for him, but it was his sister who eventually found his body,” Carillo said.

Woodside said her proudest moment was Buford’s first successful find, the body of a man who was missing in 38 feet of water.

“I was proud even though it was very sad. It’s satisfying when we can give the family closure,” she said.

Most police forces can’t afford fully trained search and rescue dogs, and rely on volunteers like Carrillo and Woodside to assist with searches. Both say they are motivated by giving back to the community and by keeping their dogs active.

“We both believe in community service or we wouldn’t be in the line of work we’re in,” Woodside said. “We also love dogs, but know they can serve a purpose.”

Erica Woodside with her bloodhound Buford.
fostered for future adoption; they are all already home. “I chose these dogs, and part of the commitment when they came into my house is that they will be cared for,” Hoffman says.

Hoffman’s association with bullmastiffs, most of which weigh between 90 and 140 pounds and have heads the size of toaster ovens—came about by a confluence of planning and happenstance.

Hoffman says he had always loved dogs beginning in his boyhood in Portland, Ore., but, as all dog lovers know, some dogs are just really special. For Hoffman and Greer, one of those special dogs was Caesar, a Rottweiler. He was part of the household for years. And when he died, Hoffman says getting another Rottweiler just didn’t seem right.

“We talked about getting another [Rottweiler], but we thought we would never find another one like Caesar,” he says. “So we started researching other breeds and kept coming across bullmastiffs.”

When Hoffman and Greer decided to take the plunge and buy a bullmastiff, the breeder sold the dog with the expectation that he would be entered in dog shows.

“That was our introduction into the dog show world,” Hoffman says, adding ruefully, “We are now on our fourth motor coach.”

The most famous rider in the motor coach to dog shows all over the U.S. was Liam. Or, more formally, “American/Canadian CH Bastions Music in the Glen, RN, CGC.” Liam was born in 2002, and when he was entered in shows, “This dog started winning and just didn’t stop.”

It was Liam who won Best of Breed twice at Westminster, and he was also the fifth bullmastiff in the history of the show to win a Group placement, coming in fourth in the Working Group category in 2008.

Part of the sadness of loving big dogs is that big dogs tend to have short lives. Liam died last year, but Hoffman reports that “Puppies of his continue to do well in shows all over the world. We have three of his offspring and a grandpup of his.”

Living in the moment
But as proud as he is of Liam, it is with even more emotion that he talks about another bullmastiff, Darcy.

Darcy had been abandoned and mistreated, was sick and skinny and was placed at Hoffman and Greer’s house by a mastiff rescue agency to see if a recovery was possible. It was not. She lived only two more weeks.

“But those last two weeks,” Hoffman says, pausing to collect his emotions before continuing: “She had good food, a warm clean bed, and a lot of love.”

And he knows that two good weeks don’t seem like much after a life of suffering, but he also knows this: “Dogs live in the moment—not yesterday, and they don’t fret about tomorrow—now.” When she died, she knew she was loved. “Her urn rests on the dresser in our bedroom,” he says.

So, in addition to the dog show travels and the 20 dogs at his house, Hoffman and Greer started a nonprofit dog rescue organization for bullmastiffs, so that any dog who comes into their care will be assured of living the rest of his or her life knowing love. And even those who can’t adopt a dog can drive one to a new home, or care for a dog until a permanent home can be found, or help buy a little food or pay for some vet care.

“There are a lot of animals that need help and lots of ways people can help,” he says.

It’s a rigorous process, requiring home visits, references and follow-ups. Bullmastiffs are sometimes used in the cruel illegal practice of dogfighting, so extra care is needed to be sure that every adoption is to a loving home.

He wants that, because he’s a dog lover, and he knows what it’s like to come home to wagging tails and happy barks.

“There are always three or four or five dogs to greet me when I get home,” Hoffman says with a smile. “It’s always a nice feeling.”

Hoffman in his Franklin backyard with several hundred pounds of happy canines.

Liam after his first Best in Breed win at Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in 2005, with judge Terry Hunt and handler Bill Martin.