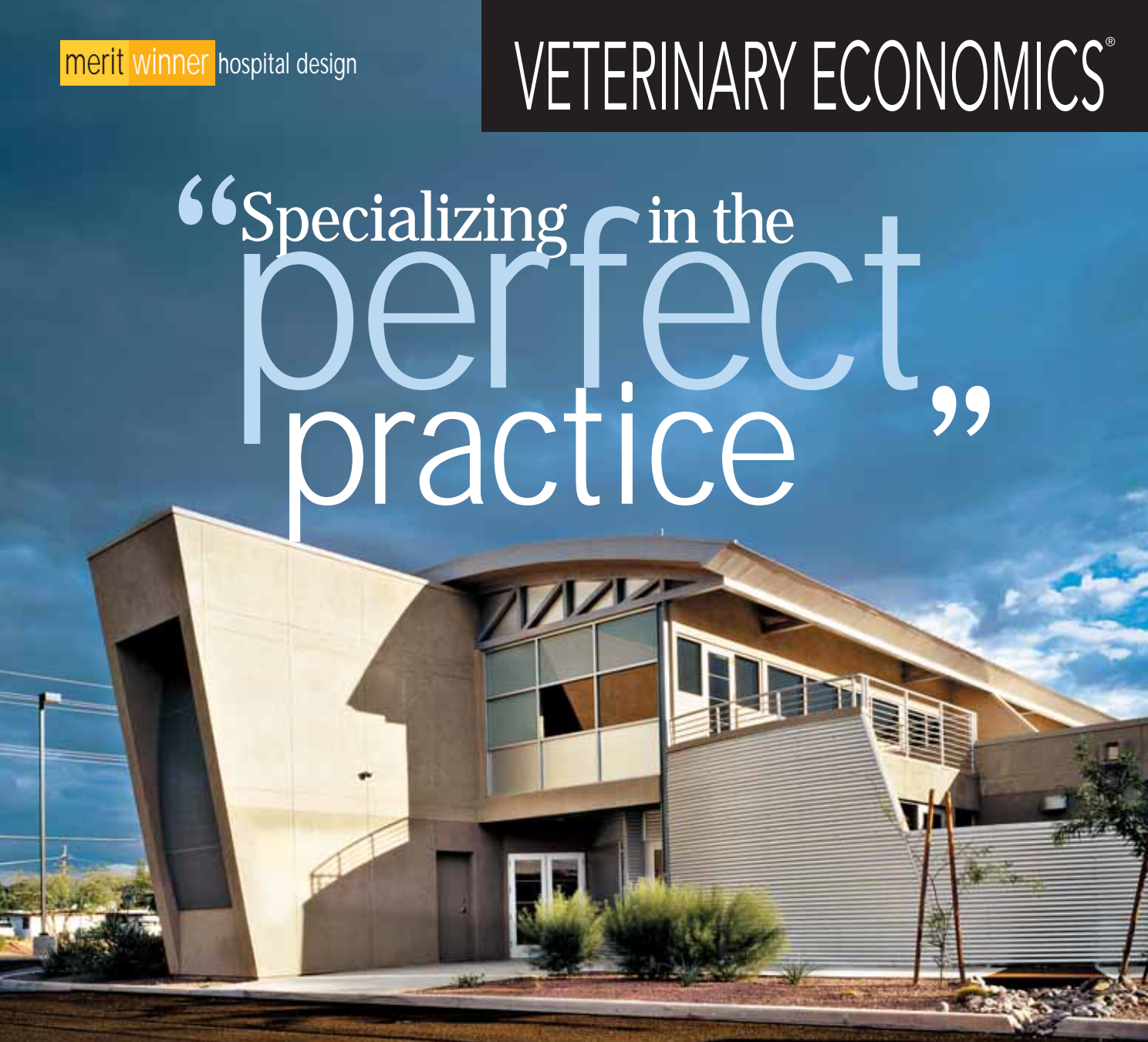


## “Specializing in the perfect practice”



These specialists designed their facility to reflect the care they give, focusing on traffic flow, workflow, and the potential for expansion. Today, clients and employees of the **Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson** know the facility supports their goals.

BY SARAH A. MOSER

**A WELL-THOUGHT-OUT FLOOR PLAN, natural lighting, and efficient setups can bolster team members' attitudes and work habits. On the flip side, a poorly designed facility—one with dim lighting, inefficient traffic flow, and uncomfortable work spaces—really hinders the quality of care and the attitude of those doing the caring. And the owners took that reality to heart when they designed Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson, a 2006 *Veterinary Economics* Hospital Design Competition Merit Award-winning practice.**



**Doctors' office:** The doctors enjoy meeting or just taking a break from the bustle of practice life in this shared office. It's spacious and affords great views from a second-story wrap-around window and outside balcony.

"It's amazing how much your environment influences your mindset," says co-owner Dr. Barbara Gores, Dipl. ACVS. "We wanted a facility that was a happy place for our team to work and enjoy each other."

Co-owner Dr. James Boulay, Dipl. ACVS, had a dream for this facility: "We've always envisioned a group of very talented specialists, each with a little pocket of knowledge, coming together in a modern, contemporary, and fun building," he says. "In our heads and hearts, we've planned this facility for years, taking the best we've seen around the country and piecing it together to make our perfect practice."

### Thinking through the floor plan

Specialty and emergency/critical care require a different sort of floor plan. That's where friends at the Veterinary Specialty Practice Alliance, an association that comprises 18 large, multi-specialty practices around the country, came in handy. "Through this alliance, we looked at many hospital designs," says Dr. Gores.

Competition judges lauded the Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson for an innovative, modern exterior, and for an "excellent, well-thought-out" floor plan. To get ideas for this efficient floor plan, the doctors mentally "walked" the design, many times over, from the view of the client and pet, staff member, and doctor.

"I wanted to make the hospital experience easy on clients and staff members," says Dr. Gores. "To improve patient flow and communication, and control noise, we needed to design a clear traffic pattern. It's easy to overlook this step, but a poorly contrived floor plan wastes a

lot of energy. If your practice is patient-focused, as is ours, then it's important to move through your design as a patient would to create the most efficient flow. This approach benefits your patients and helps your staff members make the best use of their time and effort."

What this experience netted Drs. Gores and Boulay is a plan that revolves around the ICU, the hospital core, where all the specialties combine their strengths. Each specialty department has a separate work area that feeds directly into ICU, allowing easy access to special diagnostics. And the design facilitates future expansions by allowing any area to expand independently, if needed.

### More than a box

The floor plan and traffic flow of a veterinary hospital fit well in a box-like building. But the outside of this kind of structure can be boring. This practice, however, is anything but square.

Built with a two-story curved roof mass, which covers the public spaces and surgery areas of the practice, the exterior gives the building a strong presence in a region otherwise known for flat-roofed adobe buildings common in the Southwest. "We feel that our hospital should reflect our state-of-the-art care. We wanted a modern, open, contemporary design that stands out from the typical Tucson architecture," Dr. Gores says.

The doctors also wanted to take advantage of one of Tucson's best features: sunlight. Glass walls all around the building supply natural light and great mountain views. To combat the Arizona heat, they used angled walls and beams that act as sunshades and add architectural interest.

"We chose William Paul Stamm, our architect, for his unique style," says Dr. Boulay. "And he brought his trademark contemporary building design to our building, inside and out." Stamm included second-floor balconies, which add to the architectural design and provide a practical use. "We might not be able to get out for a walk," says Dr. Boulay, "but if we can step out on the balcony and enjoy the environment, we fulfill one of our core values of balancing our lives. If we're more balanced, we do a better job in our profession. And with our spectacular sunsets, it's not uncommon for us to stop rounds and go out as a group to breathe in the sunset together before tackling our next case."

# floor plan Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson



**Conference room:** This large room serves as a continuing-education room for community veterinarians, support staff, and pet owners. A small kitchenette sits adjacent. A separate entrance allows seminar attendees to enter and exit without disturbing clients in the reception area.



**Exam rooms:** These rooms feature digital radiography equipment including computer monitors to view radiographs, CT scans, and ultrasound images. Doctors also use PowerPoint presentations to explain disease conditions and treatments in the exam rooms. More features: windows placed at dogs-eye-level and wall-mounted fold-down exam tables that give the team more space, when needed.



#### a look at the numbers

Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson

4909 N. La Cañada Drive

Tucson, AZ 85704

(520) 795-9955

fax (520) 795-9960

www.vetspecialtytucson.com

**Owners:** James Boulay, DVM, MS, Dipl. ACVS; and Barbara Gores, DVM, Dipl. ACVS

**Associates:** 10 full time, 3 part time

**Hospital team:** 63 full time, 16 part time

**Practice type:** specialty referral and 24-hour emergency/critical care

**Building size:** 10,100 square feet

**Number of runs:** 10 hospital indoor (limited by local code)

**Number of cages:** surgery-4, radiology-3, ICU-27, wards-29, isolation-3

**Number of parking spaces:** 24 client, 41 staff

**Construction cost:** \$1.5 million (building only, excludes land purchase, landscaping, parking lot, etc.)

**Land purchase cost:** \$298,000

**Site improvement fees:** \$60,000

**Professional fees:** \$180,000

**Equipment cost:** \$520,000

**Furnishing cost:** \$56,000

**Computer cost:** \$65,000

**Year built:** 2004

**Architect:** William Paul Stamm

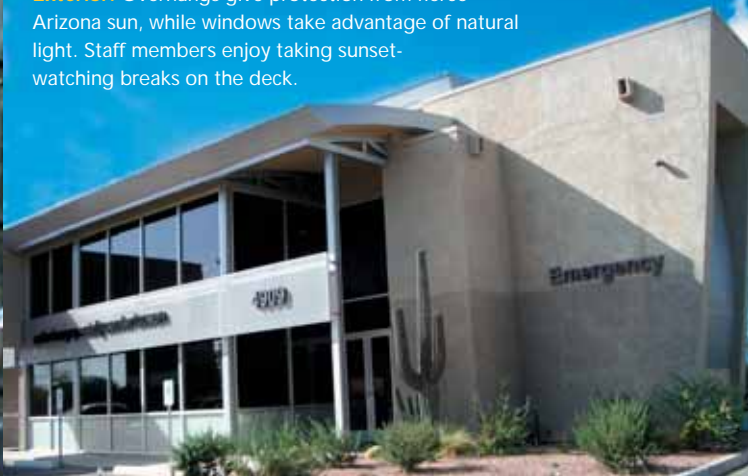
William Paul Stamm Architect, Inc.

4341 E. Coronado Drive, Tucson, AZ 85718

(520) 577-1351 • fax (520) 529-3712 • wpstamm@netzero.com

**Project coordinator:** Kurt Brown

**Exterior:** Overhangs give protection from fierce Arizona sun, while windows take advantage of natural light. Staff members enjoy taking sunset-watching breaks on the deck.



#### take-away lesson

## Don't go it alone

"Dr. Boulay and I never would've built this hospital if it weren't for the help and support of so many of our colleagues," says Dr. Barbara Gores. "We were forced to relocate our practice, and with the encouragement and help of our local referral veterinary community, we decided to stay in Tucson and build a new facility. Additionally, many of our colleagues in the Veterinary Specialty Practice Alliance hospitals around the country offered up all of the knowledge they had gained in building their own facilities and supported us in our vision to keep going with our own specialty hospital."

Dr. Gores says that the Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson is a testament to the support they received from other specialty hospitals, referring veterinarians, and clients. She recommends finding a support system when you take on a building project—and in general. "This support system was a great source of ideas for what to do—and what not to do," she says. Drs. Boulay and Gores traveled around the country, checking out specialty hospitals, and gathering the best tips from each to make the ideal hospital for them. "We got so much support and so many ideas from our friends in the veterinary community," says Dr. Gores. "I hope this hospital makes them as proud of their contribution as we are grateful for it!"



**Comfort room and memorial garden:** Furnished with a soft, home-like look, this room opens onto a memorial garden, top, complete with a small fountain and a private exit away from the main lobby.



**Reception:** Clients and staff members enjoy a bath of sunlight in the reception area. Separate seating gives clients options, and a curved check-in desk with varying heights of countertops gives pet owners comfortable writing surfaces and receptionists some privacy.

### Plan to expand

“We knew from the start we were going to build the hospital so it could expand in any direction,” says Dr. Gores. “We thought, ‘What if one specialty suddenly grows three times faster than another, or we need to add another specialty? Or what if we need to enlarge the ICU? Expandability was incorporated into the design so we’d never get trapped again.”

The team designed a central ICU, with specialties surrounding the ICU like spokes and they chose a site with adjacent land and an extra acre. They could expand any specialty area—or add one—without much interruption of the rest of the building. And it’s a good thing they planned ahead, because just one year out, they’re getting ready to build again.

“We’ve already met with the architect to build on an additional 8,000 square feet,” says Dr. Boulay. They plan to build in a U-shape around the back of the hospital, adding more areas for central supply; ICU; surgery; dentistry; and radiology, a new specialty.

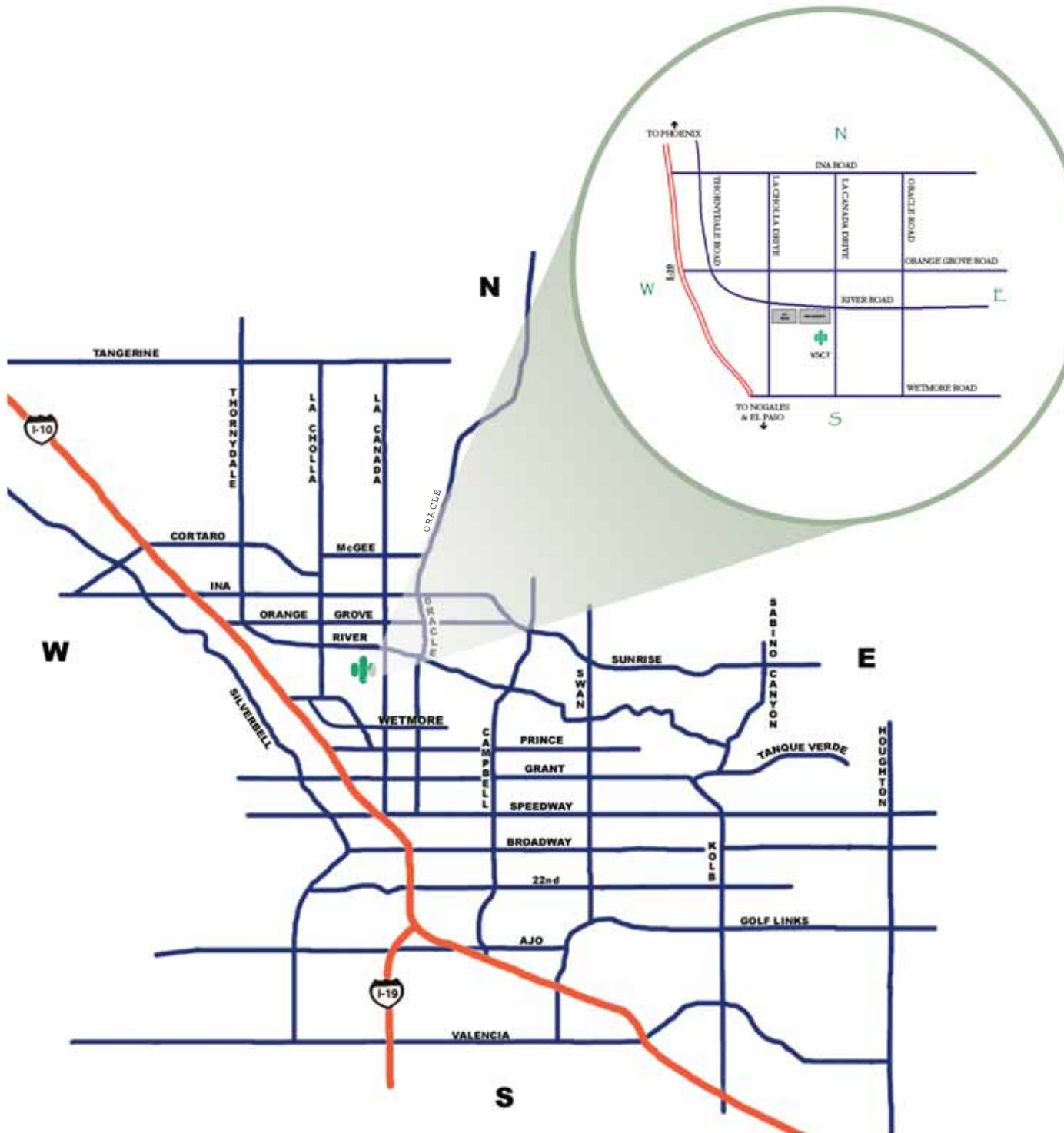
“The hospital is growing so fast,” says Dr. Boulay. “Sometimes I stand in the parking lot and see 40 cars there, and I think about how I’m responsible for all of these people’s livelihoods. It’s scary, but exciting to think that we’re all so interdependent on each other. You can build a great building, but it’s not the building that makes the practice, it’s the people.” ■



**ICU:** All hospital functions spring from the ICU, which serves as the central hub for the hospital. With 27 cages, four runs, and two oxygen cages, the ICU sits in the middle of the hospital for easy access to and from each individual specialty area. The pharmacy, lab, and employee entrance are nearby.

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# veterinaryspecialtycenter tucson



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