

# Burlington County Times

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## Mount Laurel Animal Hospital expansion delivers specialty care

By Lisa Ryan

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The Mount Laurel Animal Hospital recently completed a roughly \$7 million facilities expansion, enhancing its services in the process.

MOUNT LAUREL — The Mount Laurel Animal Hospital recently completed a facilities expansion that was two years in the making, and has brought additional specialty services to the center.

Prior to the roughly \$7 million expansion, patients and their owners had to go outside of the practice to see specialists, according to veterinarian Robert Mankowski. He and Dr. Christopher Torre have co-owned the hospital for about five years, and cut the ribbon on their 25,000-square-foot facility last week.

They were able to add services like enhanced 24-hour emergency care and more space for treatment, and introduce in-house specialists as construction allowed.

Mankowski said adding multiple specialties at once was just one of the challenges, but he and Torre needed the extra space to achieve their goals.

“We had a vision to help our clients, help our patients, and be a bigger part of the community,” he said.

Neurologist Phil Cohen joined the practice in September as part of the expansion.

He was recently able to treat Boo-Boo, a canine patient who is now recovering his mobility. Boo-Boo was struggling to walk before he had neck surgery this winter at the hospital on Mount Laurel Road.

Cohen said patients typically take six to eight weeks to recover from a procedure like Boo-Boo's, but it was almost a struggle to keep the 10-year-old Lhasa apso on bed rest just two weeks after the operation.

"There's definitely a recovery period after a surgery like that," Cohen said. "Fortunately, Boo-Boo was on the shorter side of things. His owners were very diligent."

To enhance services, the hospital also needed to expand its building, by 18,000 square feet, as the practice had outgrown its space. Based in the township about 40 years, the roughly 7,000-square-foot clinic had just nine exam rooms and two surgical suites, according to a news release.

Now, doctors see pawed and clawed patients in one of 23 exam rooms, perform surgery in one of six suites, or work in a new intensive-care unit. The new space allows the practice to build upon its 24/7 emergency care as well.

Other enhancements include on-site CT and MRI scans, the latter of which helped Cohen find the source of Boo-Boo's pain and stumbling gait: a slipped disk putting pressure on the dog's spinal cord. Boo-Boo's condition wasn't improving with rest and medication, so his family agreed when Cohen said surgery was in order.

Cohen said that since animals can't tell their doctors what they're feeling, collaboration between in-house specialists and general-care veterinarians can help meet patients' needs more effectively. In Boo-Boo's case, Cohen had newly hired physical rehabilitation specialists he could consult about the dog's post-surgical movement.

In the expanded facility, physical rehab and pain maintenance staff can use treatment tools like an underwater treadmill for low-impact recovery work, and the hospital is also staffed with dermatologists and eye specialists.

Site improvements include a new elevator to the second floor, more parking, a revamped lobby, and the addition of an auditorium for educational and adoption-focused events. The auditorium will also be open for community rentals.

"(The work was worth it) just to have clients be so thankful, and to offer such a

variety of services they can come to in one place,” Mankowski said.