



**THE MICHIGAN**  
**VETERINARIAN**  
MICHIGAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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## Prepare for that moment of truth

By Bonnie Ballard, MLD, CAE

“Daring is saying I know I will eventually fail and I’m still all in.” – Brené Brown

Earlier this fall, during the lame duck session of the Michigan state legislature, I had the responsibility of testifying with other MVMA members about a few bills we were tracking. We became aware of the committee hearing at about 3:00 pm the day before, so had little time to prepare. During our testimony, one of the representatives didn’t pose a question, but rather, commented with superiority, judgment, and condemnation about our written testimony for a different bill. It’s not the first time I’ve been shut down or shamed during advocacy. Nevertheless, it set me on my heels. Her attack felt personal. It took me a few days to find my footing again. And, although I wasn’t happy about being treated like a villain, I am glad that the Representative behaved that way. It reminded me of a very important aspect of leadership.

You have to be ready for each moment of truth.

Being in the veterinary space is a dream come true for me. I get to work with people who make and keep animals healthy. I get to advocate on their behalf. It also means that there will be some hot button issues and emotional disagreements between MVMA and other groups, and sometimes even among MVMA members. In order for me to provide consistent, clear leadership, I have to understand where I stand personally with some of the issues MVMA faces as well as where the organization stands. And then, I need to spend time reconciling the differences. I have to do the intellectual work ahead of time so that when I’m faced with a moment of truth (like the committee hearing earlier this fall), I will be able to respond with clear, decisive, and competent action.

That experience also gave me a tiny glimpse of what veterinarians and their teams go through probably daily when dealing with some of their clients. The idea that you must do everything you can to heal/save an animal as cheaply as possible; or the idea that you have the skill to heal an animal but are held back because of a client’s financial limitations. You have all experienced those situations. And yet, that expectation or that tough situation can weigh on veterinary healthcare teams and over time can take a toll. By taking time to specifically think through some of these issues ahead of time and how you want to respond will build your resilience and allows you to live true to your values without taking on the issues some clients try to place on you.

Whether you are leading an organization, leading a team, or a member of a team, if we take the time to reflect on the tough issues in the time and place of our choosing, we can each live and work with integrity. It won’t work every time, or for every situation. We will have days we hit it out of the park. And we will have days we fail. But we will be living a life of which we can be proud. My veterinary journey has barely started, but I’m all in. 🐾



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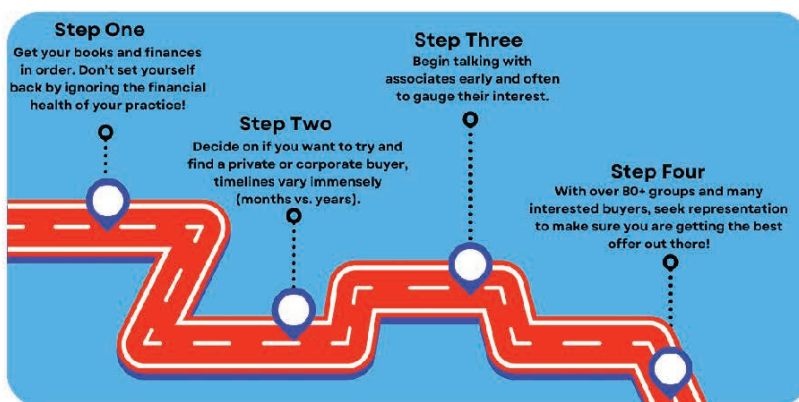


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# PRESIDENT'S LETTER

## Changes Provide a Chance to Grow and Adapt

By Dana Tatman-Lilly DVM, MS, ISFM AdvCertFB

It's hard to believe that my tenure will soon draw to a close and this year of change is nearly completed. It is bittersweet that this is my last President's Letter, but I am excited about the changes we have experienced and the future of this organization. Over this year, one thing that has stood out is the importance of accepting and adapting to change. Regardless of what type of veterinary medicine we practice, a common trait is adaptability, which was certainly true for me during my year as MVMA president.

I was naïve in thinking I would have it 'easier' than some of my predecessors. Some were presidents at the start or height of the pandemic with restrictions placed on veterinary medicine, or they participated in the transition from Karlene to John as CEO, just to name a couple. However, as it goes, you should expect the unexpected. During my tenure, we have had several transitions and have adapted.

First, transition to a new CEO, Bonnifer Ballard. We are in excellent hands with her taking the helm of our organization, along with our amazing staff at the MVMA office. Secondly, we had President-Elect transition mid-year and thus subsequent ranks on the Executive Committee. This was due to the appointment of Dr. Sri Sreevatsan as Dean at a veterinary school outside Michigan. Tim Duncan became our newest member of the Executive Committee as 2nd Vice-President for the remaining part of the year. The final transition is the result of the upcoming retirement of a long-time staff member, Sheri Fandel, after 35 years with the MVMA. She was Chief Operations Officer and unofficial MVMA librarian. We have treasured her vast knowledge of our organization, her passion for helping the veterinary field, and most importantly her mentorship and friendship over the many years. Sheri did

an excellent job in preparing Angel Davis for her new role as Director of Operations. With Sheri taking much deserved time off we have adapted to being without her at the office prior to her official retirement this month. On behalf of all the MVMA, thank you Sheri for your many years of service.

All of these changes, while challenging themselves, provided the organization with a chance to grow and adapt to what the future may bring. As of January 1, 2025, I will be passing my gavel on to Dr. Matt Hynes. While he moved up the ranks earlier than anticipated to become president, he is ready and will be a great leader and I will have a front row seat as Immediate Past-President.

Speaking of Immediate Past-Presidents, it has been a great honor to have Dr. Larry Letsche as my predecessor as MVMA president and to call him a friend and a colleague. His passion for organized veterinary medicine and legislative matters affecting veterinary medicine is contagious. Besides being in succession on the Executive Committee over the last 4 years with him, I also had the privilege of being Michigan's temporary AVMA Alternate delegate alongside him this summer. This was another time when the MVMA Board adapted due to the unexpected; the deployment of our AVMA delegate.

In closing, none of this year would be possible without the MVMA staff, especially Kara Henrys and Angel Davis who do so much to keep things running smoothly; the collaboration of the bright minds of the Board of Directors who have been so supportive and adaptable to unpredictable changes this year. Once my term on the MVMA board ends next December, I plan to continue to volunteer for the MVMA, in my role as Chair of the Small Animal Series. 🐾



“Once my term on the MVMA board ends in one year, I plan to continue to volunteer for the MVMA, in my role as Chair of the Small Animal Series.”

Dana Tatman-Lilly, DVM, MS, is the MVMA's 2024 President, and can be reached at [tatmanlilly@gmail.com](mailto:tatmanlilly@gmail.com)

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