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## Roberts honored for extraordinary service to veterinary college

By [Jeffrey S. Douglas, APR](#)

BLACKSBURG, Va., June 1, 2009 -- Dr. Kent C. Roberts, of Williamsburg, Va., was presented with the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine's most prestigious honor, the John N. Dalton Award, during the college's 2009 commencement ceremonies at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg.

Roberts was recognized for his lifetime achievements and contributions as a successful private practitioner, a leader in the organized veterinary medical community, a founding faculty member of the [veterinary college](#) and his generous donations as a philanthropist.

"History will view the role that Dr. Kent C. Roberts has played in the development of the profession of veterinary medicine in Virginia as one that is broad and deep, one that is steeped in service to people and animals, and one that is characterized by devotion to duty," said Dr. Gerhardt Schurig, dean of the veterinary college. "He has played a monumental role in the creation and development of our college."

After service in the United States Navy in World War II, Roberts followed his father's footsteps and earned a doctor of veterinary medicine from the New York State College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University in 1951. Shortly thereafter, he established a private veterinary practice in Purcellville, Va., and operated it for almost three decades.

During this time, Roberts was elected and served as president of the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association, served as a member of the board, and eventually the president of the Virginia State Board of Veterinary Examiners; and he was appointed by the governor of Virginia to serve as a member of the Virginia Veterinary Medicine Study Commission, a group which was charged with assessing the need and considering the feasibility of the creation of a college of veterinary medicine for the commonwealth of Virginia. In 1974, the same year that veterinary college founding Dean Richard B. Talbot was recruited from the University of Georgia to come to Virginia and build a new college, Roberts was named the Virginia Veterinarian of the Year by the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association.

Several years later, Talbot contacted Roberts and invited him to come to Blacksburg, join the faculty, and help build the school. Heavily involved with family and friends, deeply involved with community affairs, and enjoying what he once described as being in "a comfortable rut," he consulted his wife Shirley, who proclaimed: "Well if you're ever going to do anything else, I suppose we better get on with it."

Roberts joined the college and arrived in 1980, during the first year of college operations. He served as director of extension, helped establish the Southwest Virginia Veterinary Medical Association, created and edited the extension publication, "Virginia Veterinary Notes" -- which he directed for more than two decades -- recruited private practitioners to participate in doctor of veterinary medicine student clerkships, and taught.

He served as an important ambassador for the college, establishing key relationships with the Virginia Federation of Dog Clubs and Breeders and other organizations. For years he served as steward of the college's continuing education program, organizing continuing education programs for practitioners, and related organizations such as the Virginia Animal Control Officers' Association. He also provided important leadership for the college as interim Veterinary Teaching Hospital director.

Roberts was also active on the national arena. He served as president of the American Association of Extension Veterinarians, and he played an important role in helping build what is considered one of the largest and most comprehensive veterinary continuing education events in the



*Dean Gerhardt Schurig (left) and Dr. Kent Roberts*

world: the North American Veterinary Conference (NAVC). Roberts served as president of the NAVC in 1991. He has been active in many professional societies and has been a member of the American Veterinary Medical Association since 1951.

Roberts was accorded emeritus status by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors in 1994 and officially retired from the college in 1995, although he continued to serve as a volunteer for many years afterwards.

In 2002, Roberts and family endowed the C. R. Roberts Professorship in Clinical Veterinary Medicine in the veterinary college, which is now occupied by Professor Michael Leib in the Department of Small Animal Clinical Sciences. The professorship was designed to honor the life and contributions of Kent's father Clarence, a veterinarian who began as a hard-working dairy practitioner in upstate New York and went on to forge a career in corporate veterinary medicine, retiring as president of Sealtest, a division of Kraft Foods.

Roberts is now actively retired, and he and his wife spend much of their time at their home in Williamsburg, Va.

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## Event Calendar

Today is Saturday June 12

▶ All day

[Essential Europe Grad Trip](#)

▶ 11:00 am

[National Capital Region Alumni Chapter - Virginia Tech Sports Day](#)

▶ 12:00 pm

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