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## STC vet joins fight against ovarian cancer

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ST. CHARLES – Although people visit Gateway Veterinary Clinic seeking care for their pets, veterinarian Kurt Klepitsch said it's not unusual for clients to ask him and his staff about their own health.

It's in this environment that Klepitsch hopes to raise awareness about the symptoms of ovarian cancer, a disease his 19-year-old niece was diagnosed with last year. He said he knows he won't cure the disease, but he might help a woman learn of an early diagnosis.

The St. Charles clinic is raising awareness through brochures, teal lapel pins, posters and discussions as part of the Veterinary Outreach Program launched by the Ovarian Cancer Symptom Awareness organization.

Today, representatives from OCSA and the Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association are expected to welcome Klepitsch and his clinic as the program's first members.

"It's extremely exciting," OCSA executive director Vallie Szymanski said.

According to the American Cancer Society, there were about 22,280 cases of ovarian cancer and about 15,500 deaths from the disease in the United States last year.

Symptoms include bloating, pelvic or abdominal pain, feeling full quickly and urinary problems.

Szymanski co-founded the OCSA with her friend, Susan Roman, who died from ovarian cancer in March. Szymanski – whose father was a veterinarian – and Roman – who believed her dog, Bacchus, had tried for months to tell her she was sick – agreed dogs should be included in the awareness mission.

Peter Weber, executive director of the Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association, said it makes sense for veterinarians to promote awareness, and not just because their oath includes promoting public health. More than 80 percent of veterinarians graduating today are women, and statistics show women generally bring the family pet to the vet.

The Veterinary Outreach Program is, Weber said, “fighting ovarian cancer with animal passion.”

The program also addresses the fact that pet owners take better care of their pets than themselves.

“Your animal needs you to take care of yourself,” Weber said.

Visit [www.ovariancancersymptomawareness.org](http://www.ovariancancersymptomawareness.org) for information.



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