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The Bridge Club Opens Nominations for the 2026 ICON Award *Spotlighting Excellence in Veterinary Care and Those Redefining What's Possible*

PALATINE, IL — August 11, 2025 – The Bridge Club, veterinary medicine’s leading conversation platform, is now accepting nominations for the 2026 Bridge Club ICON Award. This prestigious honor recognizes outstanding individuals from across the profession who are driving meaningful change and elevating veterinary care.

Each year, The Bridge Club introduces a new ICON category to celebrate different areas of impact across the profession. For 2026, the focus is **Excellence in Veterinary Care**—recognizing those who are redefining what’s possible in veterinary medicine through innovation, leadership, and compassion. This year’s category also aligns with the NAVC’s VMX 2026 theme, “Celebrating the Champions of Care,” further underscoring the importance of honoring those who lead with clinical excellence and compassion.

“Our mission is to elevate veterinary medicine,” said Catherine Haskins, Founder of The Bridge Club. “Recognizing the leaders who are setting new standards of excellence is one of the most powerful ways we can spotlight progress and inspire the profession.”

This year’s honoree may be a veterinarian, researcher, veterinary technician/nurse, or industry professional whose work centers on:

- Expanding access to care in meaningful and innovative ways
- Enhancing spectrum of care through leadership, education, or breakthrough practices
- Delivering practical, high-quality veterinary solutions that improve patient and client outcomes

“At Blue Buffalo, we believe in honoring those who not only care for animals but also raise the bar for how care is delivered,” said Alex Miller, Manager of Veterinary Services, General Mills. “The ICON Award is an important platform to celebrate individuals whose commitment to excellence improves the lives of pets, clients, and the veterinary teams who serve them.”

The Bridge Club ICON Award is supported by long-term partners Blue Buffalo, IDEXX, and the North American Veterinary Community (NAVC). Since its launch in 2018, the ICON Award has honored nine influential professionals including:

- Kristin Peck, CEO of Zoetis
- Bob Vetere, former CEO of the American Pet Products Association
- Dr. Michael Cavanaugh, former CEO of AAHA
- Julia Stephanus, founder of Avviare
- John Payne, Executive Chairman at Chou2 Pharma
- Dr. Eleanor Green, former Dean of Texas A&M
- Jon Ayers, former CEO of IDEXX
- Dr. Ruby Perry, Dean of Tuskegee Veterinary College
- Kara M. Burns, MS, MEd, LVT, CVT, VTS (Nutrition), VTS Hon (Internal Medicine, Dentistry)
- Dr. Katherine Polak, Humane World for Animals



Selection Process

All nominations are reviewed and updated with the latest credentials before names are redacted for impartial evaluation by previous ICON recipients. Their rankings are then shared with The Bridge Club's sponsors—Blue Buffalo, IDEXX, and NAVC—who cast the final vote. The selected honoree will be recognized at the ICON Award celebration during the NAVC's VMX Conference in January.

Nominations are open through September 10, 2025. To nominate a deserving colleague or yourself, visit: <https://thebridgeclub.com/elevating-vet-med/>

About The Bridge Club

The Bridge Club is veterinary medicine's first and only organization dedicated to advancing the profession through conversation, connection, and recognition. From honoring game-changing leaders to convening critical conversations around the biggest challenges in veterinary care, The Bridge Club builds bridges that move the profession forward. Learn more at www.thebridgeclub.com.

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