



North Central RLRI 2027 Featured Speakers – Madison, WI

Friday

January 22

Shane Rootes

Shane Rootes is a global executive leader and provocative voice on purpose and leadership. As CEO of Christian Veterinary Mission, he challenges comfortable assumptions and calls people into the costly space between awareness and responsibility. His conviction is simple: leadership is not measured by what we see or intend, but by what changes because we were there.

Saturday

January 23

Devotion

Pastor Jeremy Rodriguez

Jeremy Rodriguez was born and raised in New York City and began volunteering at his church when he was 12 years old. He left his hometown and served as the Executive Pastor for a church in Seattle where he was introduced to Christian Veterinary Mission (CVM). In 2022, he moved to his current home in Central Wisconsin where he serves not only CVM as the Communications Coordinator, but also serves as a lead pastor in a local church. Jeremy enjoys sharing Christ and is an avid aviation enthusiast.

Session I

Gina Wintermantel, DVM

Dr. Skip has been Mississippi State CVF faculty advisor for 15 years or so. Having grown up in Maryland, received his DVM from Ohio State (long before “THE”), PhD and pathology residency at Purdue ADDL. His marriage with Linda has survived this and 2 grown children. Blessings include having served on the CVM Board of Advisors, travel on numerous short term student trips (Haiti, Nicaragua, St. Kitts, Mongolia, Brazil) & mission opportunities through Starkville FUMC to Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Mexico & Appalachia. International teaching has included Indonesia, Nigeria, Uganda, England & Scotland. Words of Wisdom: “Love what you do for people who love what you do.”

Claire Mathias, DVM

Dr. Claire Mathias is a 2025 graduate from Iowa State University. Always a lifelong learner, Dr. Claire has worked in a variety of veterinary fields, from research to regulatory medicine. She has a heart for teaching and loves volunteering on veterinary and service trips, including to Appalachia, South Dakota, and Alaska. When she is not exploring every aspect of veterinary medicine, she is trying to find the best hidden coffee shop or planning her next hiking adventure.

Christina Lehner, DVM, CVA, CHPV

Dr. Christina is a 2009 graduate from the University of Wisconsin Madison. She worked in two traditional small animal practices before finding her niche of house calls, focused on comfort care, hospice care, and home euthanasia. Dr. Christina became involved with CVM while in veterinary school and traveled to Ecuador on a short-term mission trip during that time, led by Dr. Oetzel. With her husband, she has three delightful children, whom they homeschool. She enjoys anything active & being outdoors with her family as much as possible. Dr. Christina also enjoys speed skating with her boys.

Session II

Gary Oetzel, DVM

Dr. Gary Oetzel is a professor emeritus from the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He taught food animal production medicine to dairy-oriented veterinary medical students for 33 years. He earned his DVM in 1981 from The Ohio State University and a MS from the University of Illinois in 1985. He was a faculty member at Colorado State University and a dairy practitioner in northeast Wisconsin before joining the faculty at UW-Madison in 1989. He helped start and then advised the Christian Veterinary Mission Fellowship student organization. He led six short-term missions trips to Ecuador with veterinary medical students and practicing veterinarians. Since his retirement in 2022, he devotes most of his time to helping lead his local church in Madison. He enjoys playing guitar, leading worship, traveling with family, and pursuing his interest in landscape photography. He and his wife Sonja have two grown daughters.

Cheryl Loken, DVM

Dr. Cheryl Loken is a University of Wisconsin graduate and is working as a small animal general practitioner in rural, southwestern Wisconsin. She is married with two adult children and one precious granddaughter. She has one cat, Harmony, (who hates other cats) and a granddog, Bella. She loves Jesus, reading His Word, and being involved in her local church where she is part of a growth community and works with the youth group. God has given her a passion for missions and has called her to lead an annual short-term mission trip to Honduras. She loves enjoying God's beautiful creation while hiking, kayaking, and biking.

Session III

Diane Noll, DVM

Dr. Diane Noll has been in mixed animal private practice for 36 years in Iowa, sold her clinic in 2018 and has now returned to relief and shelter work. In addition, this year she opened a clinic in her home to do what she called semi-retirement vet work! She has ventured into some teaching at a local Vet Tech school, but 4 children, and 15 grandchildren keep her busy in between trips with CVM

to Nicaragua and Haiti. An additional passion calls her to Zambia, Africa frequently where she and her husband lead a ministry to over 500 orphans, beginning with a feeding program and now growing to a Christian academy for the orphans in the community.

Brandon Scharping, DVM

Dr. Brandon Scharping grew up in rural Wisconsin, and met his wife, Morgan on a mission trip during college. Morgan and Brandon both attended the University of Wisconsin for Veterinary School. He graduated veterinary school in 2017. Drs. Morgan and Brandon have been working as food animal veterinarians at Lena Veterinary Clinic in Lena, IL ever since. Their daughter Avery was born in June of 2021, and their son Brooks was born in February of 2025. What a blessing these children have been to their lives! The Scharpings live in the countryside of Pearl City, IL. However, they are still avid Wisconsin Badger and Green Bay Packer fans. Brandon has a passion for teaching veterinary students, and enjoys having externs ride with him. He also enjoys helping students come up with a plan to pay off their student debt.

Melissa Cheeks, DVM

Dr. Cheeks is a 2011 graduate of Purdue University. She lives in Madison, WI with her husband, 2 children, and a quirky rescue dog. They love serving the city in a variety of ways. Dr. Cheeks' professional career has traveled through small animal clinical practice, CVM staff, was at home full-time with her children, and now works in church ministry. She has loved every season for different reasons, but ultimately has followed a calling to ministry, wherever God plants her.

Session IV

Elizabeth Brehm, DVM

Dr. Elizabeth Brehm is a 2019 graduate from Iowa State University. She practices mixed animal medicine in northwest Illinois and has a soft spot for cattle. Dr. Elizabeth participated in 2 short-term missions trips while a student and 3 trips (so far) as a professional. In her free time, she enjoys knitting, enjoying nature, and helping out in various parts of children's ministry within the church she's a member of.

Morgan Scharping, DVM

Dr. Morgan Scharping grew up in rural Southwest Wisconsin on a small dairy farm. She grew up showing dairy cattle and was very active in 4-H and her church youth group. She attended UW-River Falls and then UW-Madison for vet school. She met her husband Brandon on a pre-vet mission trip to Costa Rica and Nicaragua serving the rural communities there. Together they both practice food animal medicine at the Lena Vet Clinic in Lena, IL where they started working right after graduation. They have two young children, Avery (5) and Brooks (1). In her spare time she can be found spending time with her kids, volunteering at her church, gardening, or jogging with her dog.

Emily Massie, DVM

A recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Emily enjoys serving her community not only as a veterinarian, but as a lover of Christ, wife, and farmer. Emily started veterinary medicine as a large animal practitioner, but made an early career change that allowed her the space to enjoy life outside of work. She and her husband Noah, reside near Chetek, WI where they raise beef cattle and enjoy spending time working outside alongside family and friends.

Evening Challenge

Ashley Propst, DVM

Dr. Ashley Propst is a follower of Christ, wife, daughter, sister, friend, and veterinarian. She graduated from University of Illinois in 2018. She is currently located in Worthington, MN. She started as a mixed animal practitioner right after graduation and through a clinic change, she became a small animal only practitioner. She enjoys spending time with her husband Tyler. She also enjoys hiking, biking, reading, baking, music, and being snuggled up with their two cats. Ashley is grateful to be serving as the North Central Region Rep since July 2025.

