A Love of Dogs and Concern for People

Sally Sweatt is a longtime friend of the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine and the UMN Academic Health Center. A number of years ago Sally became interested in comparative neurology as she has epilepsy herself, and she has a lifelong love of animals. It is well known that people can teach dogs tricks, but what happens when we reverse the roles. In the field of epilepsy research the answer is: a lot.

Dogs provided a comparative model of epilepsy because of the similarities in their physiology and environments, and epilepsy is one of the top two most common neurological diseases in both species. Studies in dogs with naturally occurring epilepsy do not harm dogs. Rather dogs benefit from the newest and latest treatments, and the results of studies in dogs inform potential breakthroughs for the diagnosis and treatment in people. Progress in all areas of epilepsy research – human and dog – is accelerated by collaborative team science amongst all of the UMN Academic Health Center schools, The UMN Institute for Engineering in Medicine, the Minnesota Biotechnology Industry, and Mayo Clinic.

Sally has also helped with Delta Society (Pet Partners), which started the life long quest of the animal-human bond within her. She has supported the Minnesota Epilepsy Foundation's Camp Oz for youth with Epilepsy, and she is a past board member of Gillette Children's Hospital. She has also has served on boards of American Humane Society Ramsey County and Humane Society of Wright County. She has owned many types of pets and has bred Sealyham Terriers for 26 years. Through all of her experiences, she fully understands the human-animal bond.

Sally's passion for the health and wellobeing of both animals and humans led her to make gifts to support comparative oncology at the University of Minnesota, and now a very generous gift to fund both the 1st and 2nd International Canine & Human Epilepsy Workshop (iCHEW) and comparative epileptology at the University of Minnesota and within the entire State of Minnesota.