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A male veterinarian with a mustache, wearing blue scrubs and a stethoscope, is crouching on a carpeted floor. He is smiling warmly at the camera while gently holding a white and black bulldog puppy. To his left is a black medical bag with 'RWPH' written on it. In the background, there is a patterned chair and a dark wall.

Spot On Veterinary

Dr. Phillip Putter, DVM '99

There is no such thing as a typical day for veterinarian Dr. Philip Putter '99, who recently opened his practice, Spot On Veterinary, which provides concierge veterinary care in the comfort of a patient's home. Philip plans to open Spot On Veterinary Hospital in August 2016. His hospital will be in Port Chester, NY, and so, in addition to his house calls, he is working on launching the hospital.

"It used to be more "regular "appointments, surgery, and emergencies. These days with starting my own business, I wear as many hats as I can, and most days I could use a few more heads." "I'm building my business on social media, physically meeting with architects, engineers, town board members, etc. It's a process and an all-consuming one. However owning your own business is empowering and beautiful despite its challenges."

Philip is an RCDS "lifer." He has two older brothers who also graduated from RCDS. After RCDS, Philip attended Vassar College and graduated with a degree in Neuroscience and Behavior. He believed he would go into research or psychiatry or a similarly science- based career.

"My love for science stemmed from Mrs. Montgomery, previously Ms. Santiago. She was my Grade 3 through 12 science teacher at RCDS. She was, and still is, my favorite teacher and the best teacher I ever had. After graduation I worked at Mt. Sinai Hospital in a brain injury rehabilitation program; it was rewarding, but truthfully, it was depressing as well. I knew I needed a change so my girlfriend, now wife, Rebecca, and my best friend, Andy Keshner '99 , also a lifer at RCDS, suggested I consider medical or veterinary school, given my predilection for fixing things. I considered both, and veterinary school seemed more my style- less bureaucracy, more hands-on. I took a trip to Bimini to work with sharks at a research lab for three months and I was hooked. I applied to and was accepted into Ross University in St. Kitts."

The individualized care and compassion promoted in veterinary school resonated with Philip, who had similar experiences at RCDS. Among Philip's favorite memories:

"Kindergarten: Mrs. Saunders reading to us. She was the quintessential grandmother figure- white hair, soft-spoken. When she read, I was inside the book.

Third grade: Mr Helbock, my brothers' physics teacher, who came to my class as a substitute and asked a "very difficult" science question to a group of intimidated children. I got the answer right and he called me up, before he told me I was right, had me sit at the teacher's desk, and said, "Someday this guy will be teaching you." Funny and very Mr. Helbock.

11th grade: Buckling down and improving my GPA from about a C+ average to an A-, which ultimately gained me acceptance to 11 colleges, Vassar being one of them, where I met my wife."

"I learned how to "be" at RCDS. Essentially all of my major childhood advances were within those walls. The greatest gift RCDS gave me beyond my education, which I do think was excellent, was that it gave me a family. A family of friends I still have 30 years later and a family of teachers who were much more like parents in the care and attention they gave every one of us. Mrs. Montgomery, my biology teacher, has been the inspiration for my entire life's work thus far."

Today, Philip continues to use what he learned at RCDS to help not only the animals that he cares for, but their "parents." "Animals I know I can help and they are willing participants. The difficulty is not the resection and anastomosis surgery to remove a leather belt and buckle swallowed by a pet. The difficulty is convincing the owner of that patient about what is best for that pet. My greatest reward is when I am able to do so. The pet is saved and the owner is elated.

Along with entrusting RCDS to educate their sons, Philip's parents, Marvin and Jo Ellen, were also board members and the donors of our gym - Putter Gymnasium .

"I was proud that my family supported the school. The school, for my parents and their friends, who were also very generous and on the board, represented a community to hold close. It was much more than the place we went to school; it was my home."

Philip's advice for current RCDS students reflects the wisdom that comes with age: "Do your best to realize that RCDS will challenge you in many ways both intellectually and emotionally. If you embrace all that is being offered to you, it will create a solid foundation that will provide opportunities well worth the effort. Oh, and the people sitting next to you in class may just be your friends when you are 35....so be nice to all of them."