

**Reed City Area Public Schools’
Graduate Highlight
by Steven Westhoff, Superintendent
Donald J. Hitzemann, D.V.M.
RCHS Class of 1965**



“I remember the speaker at graduation telling us to choose our dreams, and we could be anything we wanted to be.” Donald J. Hitzemann, a talented area veterinarian listened to that message and followed his dream.

Dr. Hitzemann graduated from Michigan State University with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 1971. This 1965 Reed City graduate shared that there were a lot of people who provided inspiration along the way.

“The one teacher who made a tremendous difference in motivating me was Loren Kilmer. If it wasn’t for him, I never would have accomplished what I have. He stimulated me to want to learn and to work hard at it.”

After his graduation from MSU, Dr. Hitzemann returned to the area and worked with Dr. Gordon Gilbert as a food animal practitioner and then in 1980 he opened his own practice: 19 Mile Veterinary Clinic in Big Rapids, which serves food animal, exotic, equine, and small animals.

One of the highlights of his veterinarian career has been the mentoring of numerous high school and college students who have hopes of becoming veterinarians. Of the students he’s been able to help, Dr. Hitzemann stated “a lot have made the grade and a few are distinguished.” Dr. Hitzemann believes it is important to give back to your community and university and as a result has become involved in the development of a preceptorship program at Michigan State University in which students select a participating practice, the type in which they want more experience, and then spend part of a semester with that practice, frequently speaks to 4-H groups, and guest lectures at local high school science and career classes.

Dr. Hitzemann married his childhood sweetheart, Carla Jean Gawne, in 1969 and has two wonderful daughters, a terrific son-in-law and two awesome grandsons.

Dr. Hitzemann is the kind of vet who will literally get down on the floor with your pet to help them out and provide needed care. I know this because he did so with my golden retriever just last week when he injured his back leg. My wife and I contacted Dr. Hitzemann due to his connection with Reed City schools and the fact that he (and his staff) were willing to stay late to help out our dog that we love very much. We learned that Dr. Hitzemann loved our dog, too, and I’m sure several other animals that he treats. Dr. Hitzemann stated it best: “I grew up in a small town and wanted to be good at something. I have accomplished that and along the way have developed a very special bond with my clients. Whether it is a farm animal or pet, they are always an important part of the client’s life.

Reed City Area Public Schools is truly proud of Dr. Donald Hitzemann, Reed City High School Graduate, class of 1965! I’m also proud that he’s my new vet!