

June 17, 2009

Howard Weiner
Principal
Miami Palmetto Senior High School

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Principal Weiner:

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) was shocked—just as you must have been—to learn that a former Miami Palmetto Senior High School student, Tyler Weinman, has been accused of mutilating and killing at least 19 cats across South Miami-Dade. **I am writing today to offer, as a gift from PETA, virtual-dissection software and other non-animal learning methods to permanently replace animal dissection in the school's curriculum.**

A *Miami Herald* article indicates that Weinman had previously dismembered cats in Lynn Evans' anatomy course at Palmetto High. While Evans states that "[d]ecades of people in the anatomy field have started with dissecting cats," we would like to point out that many animal abusers, murderers, and serial killers also start out by dissecting animals in school. The likely connection between classroom cat dissection and Tyler Weinman's cruel acts outside school should not be so easily dismissed.

Researchers have found that classroom animal dissection can lead to insensitivity, emotional hardening, and callousness toward animals and nature.^{1,2,3} Additionally, research has shown that witnessing cruelty to animals—as dissection could certainly be described—is associated with a greater likelihood of committing violent acts against animals.⁴

You may also be aware of the well-established link between animal abuse in adolescence and subsequent violent behavior toward humans.^{5,6,7} For example, serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer attributed his fascination with murder and mutilation to classroom dissections. In the last interview before his death, televised on *Dateline NBC*, Dahmer stated, "In ninth grade, in biology class, we had the usual dissection of fetal pigs, and I took the remains of that [pig] home and kept the skeleton of it, and I just started branching out to dogs, cats." According to Dahmer, he

¹E.S. Paul and A.L. Podberscek, "Veterinary Education and Students' Attitudes Towards Animal Welfare," *Veterinary Record* 146 (2000) 269–72.

²G. Russell, "Biology: The Study of Life," *AV Magazine* 105.3 (1996): 2–7.

³D. Solot and A. Arluke, "Learning the Scientist's Role: Animal Dissection in Middle School," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 26.1 (1997): 28–54.

⁴K. L. Thompson and E. Gullone, "An Investigation Into the Association Between the Witnessing of Animal Abuse and Adolescents' Behavior Toward Animals," *Society & Animals* 14 (2006): 221–43.

⁵S. Kellert and A. Felthous, "Childhood Cruelty Toward Animals Among Criminals and Noncriminals," *Human Relations* 38 (1985): 1,113-29.

⁶S. Tallichet and C. Hensley, "Exploring the Link Between Recurrent Acts of Childhood and Adolescent Animal Cruelty and Subsequent Violent Crime," *Criminal Justice Review* 29 (2004): 304–16.

⁷M.L. Peterson and D.P. Farrington, "Cruelty to Animals and Violence to People," *Victims and Offenders* 2 (2007): 21–43.

enjoyed the excitement and power he experienced when cutting up animals and fantasized about cutting up a human body.

This disturbing cycle of violence can be curtailed by instilling respect for animals in students at Palmetto High. A good place to start is to provide them with humane science lessons in place of lessons that teach students to treat animals as "objects" that can be used and abused at will.

You may be aware that across the board, studies have shown that non-animal learning methods teach biology as well as—and in many cases, better than—animal-based methods.⁸ In addition, many students find them more enjoyable to use, and these methods can save schools time and money. Based on these studies, the National Science Teachers Association amended its position statement last year to approve the use of non-animal methods as replacements for animal dissection. Concerning the cat dissections currently conducted in Ms. Evans' anatomy course, two recent studies have shown that having students create clay models of body systems actually teaches human anatomy better than dissecting cats.^{9,10}

May I hear from you regarding our offer? I can be reached at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Justin Goodman, M.A.
Research Associate Supervisor
Laboratory Investigations Department

cc: Lynn Evans
Alberto M. Carvalho

⁸G.J. Patronek and A. Rauch, "Systematic Review of Comparative Studies Examining Alternatives to the Harmful Use of Animals in Biomedical Education," *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 230.1 (2007): 37–43.

⁹J.R. Waters *et al.*, "Cat Dissection vs. Sculpting Human Structures in Clay: An Analysis of Two Approaches to Undergraduate Human Anatomy Laboratory Education," *Advances in Physiology Education*, 29.1 (2005): 27–34.

¹⁰H.K. Motoike *et al.*, "Clay Modeling as a Method to Learn Human Muscles: A Community College Study," *Anatomical Sciences Education* 2.1 (2009): 19–23.