

Dog's cancer diagnosis inspired grad's preveterinary journey

Determined to address the shortage of veterinary specialists, Brelyn Fidler made the most of her time at ASU — including rehabbing wild rhinos in South Africa

By Sona Patel Srinarayana, ASU News
December 12, 2025

Editor's note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [fall 2025 graduates](#).

Brelyn Fidler of Gilbert, Arizona, was a Sun Devil before she could read. She attended [ASU's Child Study Lab](#) for preschool and [ASU Preparatory Academy](#) from kindergarten through 12th grade before launching into her undergraduate education at the [Polytechnic campus](#).

"I chose ASU because I wanted to march in the Sun Devil Marching Band on the [colorguard](#) team and pursue a preveterinary degree while being close to home," said Fidler, a [New American University Scholar](#).

After her bull terrier (pictured with Fidler at left) was diagnosed with Stage 5 cutaneous lymphoma, Fidler discovered there was a shortage of veterinary oncology specialists in Arizona. This was the moment that led to her enrollment in the [applied biological sciences degree with a concentration in preveterinary medicine](#) in the [School of Applied Sciences and Arts](#), part of ASU's [College of Integrative Sciences and Arts](#).

"I wanted to be the veterinarian a family could turn to when their world was seemingly falling apart," she said.

During her time in the program, she embraced every opportunity, including an ASU study abroad trip with [Care for Wild](#) in South Africa, where she rescued, rehabilitated and released orphaned southern white and eastern black rhinos (seen at right).

"My responsibilities included animal husbandry tasks such as preparing milk, food and medicine, performing health assessments and body condition checks, as well as assisting with dehorning," said Fidler, who is also interested in conservation efforts in the field.

Beyond coursework and her duties as team captain for the marching band (from 2022–24), Fidler applied her classroom learning in real time as a shift leader and herd health technician for the

[Wildhorse Ranch Rescue](#). Following graduation, Fidler will continue her work at the ranch and plans to attend veterinary school in fall 2026.

Question: Did you receive a scholarship during your time at ASU?

Answer: Yes, I did. I received the ASU New American University Provost's Academic Award, the ASU Sun Devil Marching Band Special Talent Award in fall 2022, fall 2023 and fall 2024, the Winter Guard Arizona Scholarship in fall 2022, the Winter Guard International Shirlee Whitcomb Scholarship in spring 2023, and the Marley Foundation Scholarship for Veterinary Practice in fall 2024 and fall 2025.

Q: What's something you learned while at ASU — in the classroom or otherwise — that surprised you or changed your perspective?

A: College isn't just about taking classes to prepare for a career; it's a place to make meaningful connections that shape who you are.

Q: How did you balance school and work, and how did you maintain your motivation to do both?

A: Balancing all of my responsibilities required careful time management — planning my classes around rehearsals, football games and volunteer shifts, and prioritizing tasks each week. I stayed motivated by my passion for both animal care and performance, and by the sense of accomplishment I gained from contributing to a team and seeing the direct impact of my work at both the ranch and on the field.

Q: Which professor taught you the most important lesson while at ASU?

A: Dr. [Julie Murphree](#), my professor in animal nutrition and captive animal behavior management, taught me to always strive for the best outcomes and use my passion and education to make a real difference in animal welfare and conservation. But most importantly, she taught me to be my best self.

Q: What's the best piece of advice you'd give to those still in school?

A: Follow your passion and explore every possibility, no matter how many bumps or obstacles you face. Your biggest supporters will be there to cheer you on, so study hard, focus on your priorities and keep pushing forward toward your goals.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



ASU fall 2025 graduate Brelyn Fidler studied abroad in South Africa during her time in the applied biological sciences (preveterinary medicine) program, where she rescued, rehabilitated and released rhinos. Photo courtesy of Brelyn Fidler

Text image(s)



Brelyn Fidler, courtesy photo



Photo courtesy of Brelyn Fidler



Applied biological sciences graduate Brelyn Fidler adopted Littlefoot from Wildhorse Ranch Rescue before he passed last August. Photo courtesy of Brelyn Fidler