

# A PROGRAM OF PET AGE

# WOMEN

## of INFLUENCE

### 2019

**N**ow, more than ever, it's important to celebrate the accomplishments of females who have made a notable impact on the field in which they work. Pet Age is proud to present its fifth-annual Women of Influence Awards to honor 30 ambitious, hard-working females who are influential in the pet industry.

These women hold leadership positions at companies throughout the sector, including pet product manufacturers and retailers as well as businesses that provide

marketing and grooming services. This year's honorees include women who have followed in the footsteps of family members who already worked in the industry, while others have realized their dreams to establish their own companies. No matter the paths to their current destinations or their roles—with titles ranging from general manager to president, executive director, CEO and more—these women all share a deep love for animals.

The winners of this year's Women of Influence Awards explain to Pet Age what

inspired them to get into the industry and what they feel is their biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners. They also offer the issues they believe need more attention in the sector, with responses including sustainability, regulatory compliance, education about safety and best practices, improved cooperation between vets and retailers/e-commerce businesses, community outreach programs, pet obesity, dental issues and transparency in nutrition.

In addition, these women reveal to Pet Age who they consider to be their most influential role model(s), whether it was a helpful colleague who taught them how to navigate the pet industry, or supportive parents who encouraged them to lead successful, meaningful lives while pursuing their career passions.

Congratulations to the well-deserving recipients of Pet Age's 2019 Women of Influence Awards! **PA**

#### **2019 Lifetime Achievement Award: Laura "Peach" Reid**

Pet Age's Women of Influence Lifetime Achievement Award is meant to recognize someone who has made major contributions to the pet industry, and this year we honor a game-changer and trailblazer in Laura "Peach" Reid.

A 2017 recipient of Pet Age's Women of Influence Award, Reid has worked at Fish Mart since its inception in 1974. Today, she is president and CEO of the company, which is the Northeast's largest domestic and import distributor of aquatic livestock, plants, invertebrates, reptiles, small animals, birds and live/frozen food. It services more than 500 retail stores.

She's also serving her second term as chairman of the board of directors for the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC). She has been a member of PIJAC since the early 1990s and, in March 2016, she made history by being the first woman to hold that position.

"When it came time to pick our first Board Chair after our reorganization, it was important to pick someone who represented our focus on the companion animals which make up the heart of the pet care community while also recognizing the need for someone with ex-



perience working with some of the biggest players out there," said Mike Bober, president and CEO of PIJAC. "Peach was the natural fit, and her leadership over the past three years has proven it time and time again."

During her 45 years in the pet industry, Reid has become known for her business leadership and community service. She has been involved in legislative issues for decades, serving on numerous boards and committees within PIJAC, including its legislative committee, executive committee and aquatic subcommittee. Prior to being elected as chairman of the board of directors for PIJAC, she

had served on the board and also held the office of secretary-treasurer for the council. She's also contributed countless hours of time and money to support important issues involving animal welfare.

"How fortunate I am," was Reid's reaction to being notified that she's the recipient of the 2019 Pet Age Women of Influence Lifetime Achievement Award. "To be able—for the past 45 years—to essentially just be me, my passionate self, doing what quickly evolved from a job to a career, to my calling... and to still be working alongside so many great people, some of whom are my very best friends, to learn and grow at my own pace, to pretty much be the captain of my ship... and to be where I am today. I am so very grateful."

This recognition is one of many that have been bestowed upon Reid, who, in 1998, was honored as a "Woman of Substance" in the Connecticut Post. In 2015, she received PIJAC's "Chairman's Award of Excellence" in recognition of her tireless work on issues affecting the entire pet industry at the state and local levels across Connecticut. The company has also been recognized for its impact in the pet industry, including receiving the Eastern Companion Animal Distributor of the Year Award by Marshal Pet Products in 2016.

**Jennifer Adolphe**

Nutrition Manager  
Petcurean

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 7**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I have been passionate about nutrition since I was in grade school. I started my career as a registered dietitian. About 10 years ago, I decided that I wanted to combine my love of pets with my knowledge in nutrition and completed a PhD in companion animal nutrition. I now have an exciting and interesting career in the pet food industry helping to improve the lives of pets through nutrition.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** My personal ‘pet’ project has been to raise awareness about pet obesity. Pets have become obese at an alarming rate. Keeping our pets at an ideal body weight is one of the best things we can do to keep them healthy and something that we have a significant amount of control over since we determine how much food they eat and exercise they get.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** While sustainability is an issue that is gaining traction, I think it needs more attention in the pet food industry. Sustainability is about meeting the needs of today without compromising the needs of future generations. We need to use our resources wisely so we are able to feed ourselves and our pets while respecting the environment. The pet food industry needs to consider the broader food supply chain to provide pets with optimal nutrition and high-quality food, while not taking away resources from the human food supply. Pet food companies need to consider their environmental footprint when sourcing ingredients and chose suppliers with a focus on sustainability.

**Lexie Berglund**

President  
2 Dogs Way

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 11**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** During high school and college, I was working at a local bakery. One of the owners of the bakery started his own pet bakery. I decided to leave the bakery and go work with him in the pet industry. I wanted to be in an industry that was poised for growth. I found that there was a lack of healthy treats for pets in the industry at the time, and was excited to be in a position where I could use my skill set to help improve the quality of pet treats.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Growing up, my family always had a focus on health and natural remedies for ailments. I have been focused on creating treats for pets that follow that same lifestyle. We believe that everything in a pet’s diet should serve a purpose and benefit their health. Over my years at The Pound Bakery, I have worked with countless pet brands to develop new lines of pet treats or expand their current offerings. This has included everything from formulating treats and suggesting recipes to helping them with their branding.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** The regulatory system is set up in a difficult way for pet treat approval. AFFCO has some general requirements, but each state has its own rules and regulations, which makes it difficult to create quality treats and sell them nationally since regulations vary so much from one state to the next. If governed by one regulatory system, the pet industry could more quickly adapt to new trends and improve the quality of pet consumables.

**“Pet food formulation based on science helps ensure pets receive the best nutrition possible.”**  
**- Dr. Jennifer Adolphe, Ph.D.**

With a coveted Ph.D. in companion animal nutrition, at Petcurean nutritional excellence is core to everything we do.

Congratulations to Dr. Jennifer Adolphe on her Women of Influence Award! She is a leading advocate for the health of pets through her passion for and development of innovative products that pets love and pet parents trust.

We salute you with our paws, hands and wagging tails!



**petcurean**



Proudly Canadian

**Khris Berry**

Founder/Entrepreneur  
See Spot Grooming & Daycare

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 33**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I was raised with animals and consider myself a third-generation dog trainer. Animals permeated every memory and formation of my young life and when I became old enough to choose a life path, I soon turned a hobby into a livelihood. I didn't start out planning to forge a career working with pets, I now can't imagine a career without them.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** I am passionate about communication with pet owners—both client relations and as a behaviorist teaching owners to communicate clearly with their pets. As co-author of The Rosetta Bone, which focuses on social dialog and interactions between dogs and humans, I am creating new ways to dialog with man's best friend. I enjoy teaching fellow pet professionals and spend spare time away from work at industry trade shows teaching seminars.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** The pet industry and the clients who use our services are changing at a rapid pace driven primarily by the canine's social status in our homes in 2019. As our industry struggles to keep apace with these changes, we must be continually vigilant in safety, implementing best practices and bridging the communication gaps between pet owners and pet service providers. Education platforms stressing sound animal handling principles and solid voluntary oversight of ourselves as pet professionals will be key to the future of our industry.

**Dana Brooks**

President and CEO  
Pet Food Institute

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 1**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I'm a farm girl from Arkansas, where my family had dogs, horses, a rabbit and a raccoon as pets. Until I moved in 2000 to work in the U.S. House of Representatives, I was never without a companion animal. The most meaningful reason that inspired me was seeing how important pets are to my mother. After my father died in a farm accident in 1996, my mother has been comforted by the unconditional love of dogs. Her four-legged family has been the motivation she needed to move forward.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** I am fascinated by the human-animal bond. I was lucky enough to be a judge for the 2019 American Farm Bureau Federation Farm Dog of the Year award. At an event on Capitol Hill after the 2018 mid-term election, the Pet Partners teams of handlers and pets provided smiles and snuggles to congressional staffers. Watching the transformation in the staffers' attitudes made it one of the most gratifying events I've hosted in nearly 19 years.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** As an industry, we all do so much to support pets and people through community outreach programs. As a board member of Pet Partners, I am particularly proud of the work they did with partner organizations from the pet industry to advance the Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act as part of the Farm Bill. It provides funding to expand the availability of pet-friendly shelters and housing assistance for the companion animals of domestic violence victims.

**Pamela Bosco**

President  
Pet King Brands, Inc.

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 20**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** A lifelong love of all animals and a deep conviction that as pet owners and good stewards, we should provide quality care that does not harm our pets. The inspiration to share health care alternatives came from my German Shepherd rescue who, facing a total ear ablation, finally found relief from chronic, painful ear infections with ZYMOX.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** For 20 years I've been able to provide pet owners with a safe, easy-to-use and effective product that has provided relief to countless animals with skin, ear or dental health care needs. What makes it worthwhile is when I receive another pet owner's review of our product or a note saying "thank you ZYMOX" for improving their pet's life. It's knowing that our products have a big impact on pets' health and quality of life that keeps me doing what I do today—and plan on doing for a very long time.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** The pet industry has to focus on building more improved cooperation between the veterinary, brick-and-mortar retailers and e-commerce businesses, so together we can provide pet owners with the proper health care information and quality products that will help meet their pet's health care needs.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** My older brother, Michael Pellico. He's the chemist behind the patented Lactoperoxidase enzyme system in the Biogene, ZYMOX and Oratene product lines. Michael has strongly influenced my curiosity about life, the sciences and the world around me.

**Julianna Carella**

Founder and CEO  
Treatibles

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 6**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** Hearing from pet parents that were searching for ways to address their pet's health needs with cannabis and hemp is what inspired the creation of Treatibles. Hearing how our products ease their pet's anxiety and inflammation inspires us to continue this work every day.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** I feel the biggest contribution I have made is creating a new category in the pet health space that has essentially become the CBD pet product category. Although we knew the Treatibles products would gain popularity, we did not know to what extent and that the brand would actually inspire other producers to create similar products. Here at Treatibles, we feel that this new category could be one of the most important categories in pet health.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** The pet industry could benefit from more clarity around regulatory compliance. There exists a considerable amount of confusion around these products, how they are labelled properly and how they can be marketed successfully.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** Marcus Lemonis is one of my favorite role models, because he has a keen eye for what businesses need, and he is not afraid to teach entrepreneurs how to be successful, even if his advice can sting. Almost every episode of "The Profit" has some practical advice that any business owner can benefit from.

# Congratulations Pamela!

On being named one of the pet industry's Women of Influence and celebrating 20 years of business. Your lifelong love for animals and deep conviction for the quality of care all animals deserve and innovative thinking has made life-changing differences in the health of dogs and cats around the world.

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**WOMEN**  
of INFLUENCE  
**2019**  
WINNER



Pamela K. Bosco, President and Founder, Pet King Brands, Inc.



Pet King Brands, Inc. Westmont, IL 888-752-5487 info@zymox.com www.zymox.com



**Anne Carlson**  
Founder and CEO  
Jiminy's LLC

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 10**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I was vice president for one of the big pet food manufacturers. When the company was acquired by a bigger company, I took the opportunity to depart and try something different. I was approached to lead a grass-fed beef dog treats company. I loved the concept of a more sustainable alternative, but cows are not the answer. I started researching sustainable protein alternatives and stumbled across a U.N. study identifying insects as a food source that could reduce world hunger. Scientists report that insects provide more protein than beef and other meats, and use substantially less resources to produce. This was a solution.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** I am so proud to have introduced truly sustainable and humane products into the industry. Crickets are high in protein and the sustainability metrics on them are staggering. Beyond introducing these products, I've also made a huge commitment to confirming the safety, digestibility and quality of this "new" protein source.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** Address food and water security as our population grows and our climate shifts.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** When I think about who has the most influence on me and guides my actions, it is actually my daughter. I want to be a part of creating a better world for her and that means making sustainable and humane choices.



**Jennifer DeNick**  
Senior Vice President  
Coyne Public Relations

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 15**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I was fortunate enough to grow up in a home where we always had multiple pets—a dog, cats, birds, fish...even a turtle. When I started in PR, I was given the opportunity to work on two different pet-related accounts and I really took to it. With the help of my leadership team, we were able to grow two accounts into an entire division within the company.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Helping my clients reshape how they think about the human-animal bond. There's been a seismic shift in the role that pets play in our lives and in turn, companies have had to change business strategies to adapt. By making sure that my clients are speaking to pet parents in a language that truly resonates, I've helped bring to market products and services that make the lives of pets and pet parents a little better.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** From pet obesity to the prevalence of dental disease to the continued issue of heartworm, there are health problems that are entirely preventable with the right education and resources.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** My mom. She used to be a veterinary technician and also spent time working in a pet store, so it is because of her that we always had pets in our home. She instilled that love of pets in my brother and me from an early age. She always says that a house never feels like a home without a pet and it's something I find true in my own life.



**Caitlyn Dudas**  
Executive Director  
Pet Sustainability Coalition

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 6**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** In 2013, it was clear that while consumer demand for sustainable products was increasing, there were no resources to help pet businesses evolve to meet changing consumer preferences. The industry was ripe for adoption of sustainable business practices. The relatively large size of the industry provided an opportunity to create change at an exciting scale that can actually lead to improved prosperity for pets, people and the planet. Finally, PSC's co-founder Chris Bentley had clarity regarding our target audience's needs, allowing our non-profit to accelerate quickly through the development of tools that directly met a need and deepen relationships with many impact-driven leaders.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** The biggest need are education and tools. By focusing on these, survey data show that our members fare far better than traditional businesses. We are proud to be creating a community of brands that are moving toward financial resilience, increased innovation, higher employee attraction and retention, reduced supply chain risk and deep brand loyalty.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** Long-term success of the pet industry relies on all players to expand its definition of caring to include the environments where pets and their parents play and the communities where all of our pets and their parents live. By expanding our businesses to consider all stakeholders instead of just shareholders, we will be better able to align ourselves with consumer expectations and thrive.



**Cindy Dunston Quirk**  
Founder and Chief Dog Lover  
Scout and Zoe's

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 10**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** My German Shepherd, Zoe, and her allergies. She needed something to chew on that wasn't a beef bone. If it weren't for her, Scout & Zoe's would not have been started.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Continually pushing the envelope for unique protein sources. Because of Zoe's and Scout's allergies, I had to find proteins other than chicken and beef for their treats. That lead me to utilize unique proteins such as our kangaroo, duck and carp for treats. All of these proteins, especially the carp, are ones that are safe for pets with allergies and are very nutritious. Our treats are so safe I eat them. Safe for me, safe for my precious furbabies.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** Definitely transparency in nutrition. As a pet parent who feeds raw, nutrition is very important to me. I could not find products in which I had complete faith, so I developed products that I knew were healthy and nutritious; ones that are sourced locally and can be traced back to the farmer. I also knew I wasn't the only pet parent on the planet who felt that way. That is why Scout & Zoe's continues to thrive and grow. I bring products to life for my precious furry ones and that resonates with pet parents who, just like me, want their critters to live long, healthy and happy lives.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** Jane Petrolino with Horn Animal Nutrition, Candace D'Agnolo with Pet Boss Nation and Gila Kurt with Dog Is Good. All three of these women are brilliant, strong and totally committed to what they do.

# Congratulations, JULIANNA!

JULIANNA CARELLA,  
FOUNDER & CEO

INNOVATOR • TRAILBLAZER • VISIONARY

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[www.treatibles.com](http://www.treatibles.com)



**Kamie Eckert**

President and General Manager  
Royal Canin

**Number of Years in Pet Industry:** 6

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** My desire to join the pet industry was truly luck that the right opportunity arose at the right time. I was watching our Golden Retriever suffer from cancer, which was heart-wrenching on our family. Additionally, another family member had just passed away, and her connection to her dog had been so strong that it really reinforced that pets bring an amazing gift—their ability to bring out emotions in people is incredible. My heart was in a tender spot, so when the offer for a role at Royal Canin came, it just seemed like it was meant to be. Royal Canin has allowed me to lend my e-commerce expertise in an industry that was underutilizing online platforms to connect with key customers.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** One way I have personally contributed to the mission of our business is by serving as one of the early voices within our industry to accelerate the development of the pet industry as an e-commerce category and continuing to champion this space. The growth we have seen in this channel has been both challenging and rewarding, and has prompted us to evolve our organization to meet these new opportunities.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** In recent years, many inexperienced players are jumping into the arena of manufacturing pet food prompted by the low barrier to entry for pet food products. We need to advocate for high manufacturing standards. Royal Canin always has taken great pride in our quality and food safety, and continues to invest significantly to lead in setting and exceeding the highest standards.



**Aimee Gilbreath**

Executive Director  
Michelson Found Animals Foundation

**Number of Years in Pet Industry:** 10

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I left my career in corporate consulting to pursue my passion for animal welfare—a decision I'm thankful for every day. Not only do I get to do what I love, but I'm also able to make a positive impact on the lives of pets and pet owners.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Having been with Found Animals since the start, and given the nature of what we do, I've been a part of some amazing initiatives throughout the years. I'm most proud of our Adopt & Shop stores, through which over 25,000 pets have been adopted into loving homes.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** The overpopulation of pets is a huge issue. The number of homeless cats and dogs continues to rise, which is why Found Animals is focused on finding non-surgical spay and neuter methods, which we support through a variety of grants and research initiatives.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** I have been fortunate enough to have several fantastic mentors. I look for support and encouragement—a cheerleader who sees the best in me even when I do not. I also appreciate people who push me to think bigger and take more risks than I ever would on my own.



**CONGRATULATES  
KAMIE ECKERT**  
ON BEING HONORED AS ONE OF  
**PET AGE'S 2019  
WOMEN OF INFLUENCE**



**Melissa Gulbranson**  
Vice President of Marketing  
Oxyfresh

**Number of Years in Pet Industry:** 20

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** Beyond my love for pets, I was looking for a change and when I learned about Oxyfresh and its passion for creating innovative products that really matter for people and pets, I was hooked.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Oxyfresh has always been dedicated to creating better lives for pets. We've been the pioneer of non-toxic pet care products for over a decade. More and more people are hearing about us through new awareness campaigns and our mission to be the go-to place for tips, education and product solutions that pet parents can trust.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** Ingredients. Over the past few years this issue has been most visible in the pet food category. The demand from consumers to improve the ingredients in our pet's food has been clear, and now that needs to continue through other pet categories. We are so passionate about transparency and only creating products that matter, and consumers care about ingredients—where are they sourced, are they safe, are they effective?

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** My most influential role model is my father. He taught me that anything is possible with passion and a solid work ethic.



**Barb Hoover**  
Owner  
The Groomers Lounge/The Difficult Dog

**Number of Years in Pet Industry:** 34

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I grew up with family pets and a love of animals. It was never a surprise that my career would be in the pet industry.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** My biggest contribution has always been a joint effort. The Groomers Lounge would have never succeeded and grown without the wonderful support, cooperation and input of all of its members. Every member's contribution helped another in some way, whether it was advice, educational opportunities or just moral support.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** I believe that the pet grooming industry needs to pay more attention to our public image. We have all seen the horror stories of neglect and abuse. These stories go viral and dampen the reputation of the industry as a whole. There are many more of us that are kind, generous and caring. We work with homeless pets. We volunteer time with rescues. We help in natural disasters. We take our profession seriously. We compete and educate. We travel hundreds of miles a year for voluntary continuing education because we care about the pets in our care.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** Joyce Laughery was my inspiration. She had a dream that brought the industry together in a way it had never been before. With the creation of the Groomers Lounge, she made that dream a reality. The biggest honor of my life was her wish for me to take it over when she passed away in 2007.



**Michelson Found Animals**

# Congratulations Aimee Gilbreath!

**2019 RECIPIENT OF THE PET AGE  
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Congratulations  
**MELISSA GULBRANSON**  
2019 Recipient of the Pet Age Women of Influence Award

We are so proud of our Vice President of Marketing for winning this award. She has devoted 19 years to helping people and their pets live happier, healthier lives. This is well deserved, we are beyond grateful for her hard work and dedication.



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**Tracie Hotchner**  
Founder and Director  
Radio Pet Lady

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 15**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** As an author and investigative journalist, I saw a need for comprehensive information for pet owners to allow them to make the best decisions for their own pets, affecting all aspects of their wellness. After writing THE DOG BIBLE: Everything Your Dog Wants You to Know and THE CAT BIBLE: Everything Your Cat Expects You to Know, I realized how hungry people were for reliable, objective information and that inspired me to create my NPR radio show—and from that grew 10 other pet talk radio shows with respected veterinarians and other pet experts as co-hosts.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** I believe I have earned the moniker of “pet wellness advocate” because I continue to bring advice and information to pet owners that cuts through the clutter and noise of advertising and gives people facts that empower them to make the best choices for their own lives and pets. I think I have both educated and inspired pet owners to embrace the importance of their bond with their pets and be fully involved in the health of that relationship.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** We need to find a solution for how to breed and provide quality puppies for the big marketplace that is America. I think the problem of supply and demand for puppies is complicated by high emotions on the subject. We need cool heads figuring out how to safely and humanely provide healthy puppies to eager owners—without compromising the parent dogs’ welfare, and educating about safe and timely spay/neuter for most pet animals.



**Liz Ilig**  
Owner and CEO  
Puff & Fluff Spa

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 6**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I’ve always been a natural-born creator, innovator and, of course, pet lover! After moving from a small town in Iowa to Phoenix, Arizona, I struggled to find happiness in more traditional work environments. That’s when I decided to combine my love for animals and my entrepreneurial spirit to open my very own pet grooming shop!

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** In building my business, I’m happy to say Puff & Fluff is about more than dog grooming and pet-sitting. I’ve created a true community of animal lovers, and a caring, loving and welcoming environment for all. Additionally, I’ve helped others in the pet industry to build their businesses by creating engaging and efficient tools, including operations and training manuals. I enjoy helping others to streamline their systems so they can spend more time doing what they love!

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** One of the greatest issues within the pet grooming industry right now is regulation. It’s hard to believe that there are still no formal requirements to become a pet groomer. Too many pets have been hurt, or worse, and we have a responsibility to work with our legislatures to ensure changes are made.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** My mother, Carolyn. As a single mom raising five kids, she worked tirelessly at a full-time job to make ends meet. She instilled in us a strong work ethic, giving us the tools and principles we needed to become successful adults. I’m grateful to call her my mother.



**Elena Kalogeropoulos**  
Vice President of Sales  
Chasing Our Tails, Inc.

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 1**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** After over a decade in the financial industry, I was looking for a new challenge. Stephen Trachtenberg (president and owner of Chasing Our Tails) is known for thinking outside the box in order to innovate new pet trends. He was seeking someone with a different perspective to promote and inspire his brand. It was the right place and the right time, for myself and COT. Everyday I come to work ready to help guide my team, aid our pet parents and retailers, and seek out the “next big thing.”

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Working one-on-one with pet parents and retailers to help them succeed is so enriching to me. Being able to take the time to understand my retail store clients’ needs, providing educational selling points, or even helping to create a robust ISO furthers their success. When my pet parents and retailers are valued and are provided value, I know that’s the winning combination for them and for COT. Internally, I work alongside my team. There isn’t some disembodied voice coming from an office calling out directions at COT; I’m on the production floor helping to get things done when needed.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** Ingredient-sourcing is something that should be focused on. Having transparency with what your pets are eating is so key. We, as pet parents, want to understand where our food comes from—so it makes sense that this transfers to the dietary needs of our “fur children.”



**Dawn Leoso Duncan**  
Vice President  
Glo-Marr Pet Products

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 36**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I feel like I was born into the pet industry. My mom and dad bought a store and my family ran it. I was around 10. My sisters and I started out cleaning cages, feeding the animals, doing water changes in the fish department and then running the cash register. What kid doesn’t love pets? I have always had retail or manufacturing for pets as part of my daily life. So, I would have to say my parents inspired me by allowing me to part of their story in the pet industry.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** The biggest contribution my company makes for the pet business and/or pet owners is to overall pet wellness. Our products are beneficial products. They aid in healing and restoring the skin and coat, and are also just for general good hygiene. When the skin and coat are in good shape, everyone is happy.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** I think the industry needs to focus on educating retailers. The retailers have such an important role between manufacturers and pet owners. They are our voice, so the industry should encourage education on overall health, product knowledge and just being a good support to pet owners.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** Fred Nicolosi, my step-dad and founder of our company, continues to be one of the most influential role models I have had in my career and my life. He passed away in 2010 but I often find myself thinking, What would Fred think about this? That is when you know someone has made an impact on your life.

**Susan Michals**

President and Creator  
CatCon

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 5**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I always had cats growing up, and I wanted to find a way to meld my love of pets with my career. I worked in entertainment for E! for many years and as a freelance journalist for outlets like the Wall Street Journal and Vanity Fair in the areas of art, entertainment and culture. In my research I found that despite the popularity of cats on the internet, there was a void in content, products and ideas that spoke to the new generation of cat lovers, primarily the Millennial. I created CatCon to fulfill the needs of that consumer and to bring the online pet community into a real-life environment—one filled with education, experiences and more.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Before CatCon, there was no real-life location for cat lovers to gather with other like-minded individuals. There is no equivalent to a dog park for cat parents. By providing a platform for this community, both in real life and online, we're able to raise awareness about issues that affect felines, like fostering and trap-neuter-return, educate people about some common misconceptions, like the "cat lady" myth, and create a fun environment for sharing our love of all things CAT!

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** There is a whole generation of Millennial pet parents who consider their cats to be part of their family—many of them are putting off marriage or having children, or even choosing not to take those paths in life. This generation is underserved by the old priorities of many pet brands.

**Judy Morgan**

Doctor  
Naturally Healthy Pets

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 35**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I have always had a love for animals, but working as a teenager with a veterinarian when my pony needed surgery inspired me to become a veterinarian. My expansion into holistic pet care developed over years of practice and frustration with chronic inflammatory diseases in my patients. As a means to educate pet owners, I became an author, penning best-selling books, blogs and articles. I developed my supplement line to help improve pet health and longevity.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Education is my biggest contribution to pet owners. I want them to be empowered to speak up and take control of their pets' health. Rather than accepting generalized recommendations, I encourage them to ask questions to make individualized, informed decisions. I champion pet vitality through the use of high quality nutrition and products from the pet industry.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** Providing good nutrition with high-quality products rather than using our pets as a repository for low-quality waste products from the human food industry; figuring out the balance between ethical treatment of pets while saving our planet. As more emphasis is placed on pets being treated as family members, we need to find ways to improve longevity and decrease the cancer rate that is overwhelmingly high. Personally, I believe our pets have been on the receiving end of too many chemical treatments; finding natural ways to prevent parasite infestation and keep families safe is very important.

**Marie Moody**

Founder and Chairman  
Stella & Chewy's

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 16**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** In 2003 my shelter dog, Chewy, was very sick. I began to do research on raw diets, and it made sense to me that pets thrive on less-processed foods just as people do. After watching Chewy make a complete recovery eating raw food, I was inspired to create Stella & Chewy's.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Stella & Chewy's created the Journey Home Fund to bring more awareness to adult pet adoption. We are committed to both educating potential pet parents about the benefits of adopting adult dogs and supporting senior dogs that are often overlooked in shelters. For each Stella & Chewy's bag purchased, we donate a meal to an adult rescue pet. We have donated over 250,000 meals this past year.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** We need more women in leadership positions. According to APPA (American Pet Products Association), over 75 percent of pet parents are female and about 90 percent of shoppers for natural pet food are female. Therefore, having more women involved at a leadership level in our industry will prepare companies to better meet pet parents' needs.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** My dog, Tummy. He is always grateful, kind and funny. He reminds me to keep things in perspective and to enjoy the present moment.

**Linda Parks**

CEO  
Lixit

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 47**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** Love of pets and the satisfaction of manufacturing and inventing high-quality products in the USA.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Producing safe and well-made products in the USA.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** Helping potential pet owners have easy access to pets and educational information on caring for that pet.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** Dr. Frank Atchley, the founder of Lixit Corporation. He understood and promoted work/life balance as early as 1970. Dr. Atchley also promoted empowering women long before it became fashionable.

**Kerry Rod**

Vice President of Public Affairs  
PuppySpot

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 8**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I have always been passionate about animals—dogs specifically. When the opportunity arose to work for a company that placed puppies in a responsible manner and brought joy to individuals and families every day, I thought I had hit the jackpot.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Every day I get to advocate on behalf of responsible pet breeders and those who help place them with individuals and families. There is a need for those of us doing public affairs work in the pet industry to educate and communicate to legislators, and the public, that the majority of the live animal sector is doing an outstanding job.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** I believe that the industry, as a whole, needs to be open to the issues that the live animal sector is up against. Often I have found in conversations that many in the industry are not aware of the significant push to limit the availability of pets and the impact that this would have on their own businesses. I focus on protecting pet choice every day and I believe everyone in this industry has to be open to this commitment.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** I was very fortunate when I entered the pet industry to have Marshal Meyers, founder and past president of PIJAC, and Jim Boschee, pet industry veteran and past chairman of WPA, take me under their wings. They both educated, coached and supported my knowledge of the industry and the issues we come up against.

**Rebecca Rose**

President  
InClover

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 23**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** Prior to starting InClover, I was researching health care solutions with the National Institute of Health. We had \$1.5 million in grant funding to find a one-size-fits-all answer for women's health care. This process commonly took decades to reach any product outcome. I realized that what I really wanted to do was to turn health care on its ear and look for personalized solutions for animals. I wanted to deliver solutions where they were needed using the physiology of the animal to customize the outcome. So, I started InClover Research.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** I am proud to give pet parents the confidence to be able to truly care for their pet like a part of the family. As a mom to four fur kids, no matter what life brings, when my pet feels better, I feel better. Being able to share with our retail and distributor partners how our ingredients and products work with the natural processes of the pet's body changes how they recommend supplements. This personalized approach allows them to recommend exactly what the animal needs, giving them a huge point of differentiation and a loyal customer.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** An influential pet industry role model in my life is Lars Wulff, co-CEO of Mud Bay. I met Lars early in my pet industry career, when we had both come from other fields. He always has a few book titles to share and great information about culture, growth and strategy. His insights have the wisdom and depth to inspire, and the kindness and gracious sincerity to make you take note.

**Lucia Smigel**

CEO  
Petsmile

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 4**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** We have always been a pet family and many of Dr. Smigel's patients had pets. Our patients kept asking us if we had a product for pets because they wanted their pet's teeth and gums to be healthy. After a dear friend told us of their pet's oral infection because of lack of oral care, we decided to create Petsmile. We started with the human formula, took out all the ingredients that we knew pets didn't need or were harmful to them and tested them. I tested them! I put flavors I knew my own pets would love—London Broil and now Rotisserie Chicken. Today we still make Petsmile human-grade and in the same facility where we make Supersmile.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** I think raising the awareness of the importance of pet oral care is my biggest contribution to the pet business at large and to pet owners. The number of people who are ardent pet lovers and don't know that they should take care of their pet's teeth is so high. However, once they are aware they come to Petsmile since we are the only VOHC-accepted toothpaste on the market.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** My role model was my husband Dr. Irwin Smigel. We had separate roles in the business; he was the face of the brand and I was the creator of new products. Together we built a family, a life and a business. He taught me that "if it's to be, it's up to me." In addition, at a time when women were not in the workplace, he supported and encouraged me to follow my passions in and out of the workplace.

**Patti Strand**

President  
National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA)

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 48**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** My husband and I have been Dalmatian enthusiasts for 48 years, breeding, raising and showing our dogs. We became aware of pet legislation. Until the late 1980s, this legislation was generally straightforward, attempting to regulate very specific conduct and mitigating neighborhood nuisances. In the late 1980s, a new sort of legislation emerged that threatened breeds and, in some cases, sought to ban breeding altogether rather than to regulate a specific aspect that needed improvement.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Over its 27-year history, NAIA has made enormous strides in bringing together diverse factions within the pet industry that formerly understood each other's work primarily through the mainstream media. Uniting representatives of the industry has enabled us to overcome common misperceptions, identify and define genuine problems, and be more effective in making improvements and solving problems. Our websites, social media platforms, newsletters and conferences enable us to work together.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** During the last two decades, huge improvements were made in the standards of care provided for pets in breeding facilities, during transport and at the point of sale. The public is not yet aware of the gigantic improvements that have occurred. The public is still living with a stereotype of the worst kind of breeding operation imaginable. This indicates that the industry needs to do a much better job of communicating these changes.

A PROGRAM OF PET AGE

# WOMEN of INFLUENCE

2019

WINNER

Eileen Wilmarth  
Director of Marketing



From all of us at Pet Food Experts, we want to thank you for being an incredible leader that has helped this industry grow and thrive for the past 29 years. **Congratulations, Eileen!**



**Mona Straub**

President  
Just Fur Fun

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 7**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** After an extensive career in sales and marketing for Fortune 500 companies, I wanted to do something different; something that would fulfill my love of animals and utilize my business savvy. I was always looking for ways to express myself and my animals. Since dressing up can be so much fun, I came up with the idea to dress up my dogs, cats and horses in something different, yet elegant, that would be an expression of me—and Just Fur Fun was born!

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** The best way to influence others is to lead by example. I feel I have done that in diverse ways. By manufacturing a handmade high-quality product here in the USA, I have paved the way for others to follow. I have shown that you can be successful without having to manufacture overseas.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** Homeless pets and the horrific number of animals that are euthanized daily. We are killing our customers. "Don't Shop, ADOPT!"

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** The role models who taught me about life were my two moms. My birth mom, who died when I was in my 20s, taught me how to love; that no matter how many times you are hurt, open your heart and keep letting people in to see your light. Then I was blessed with the love of a second mother, a woman that took over where my birth mom left off. She taught me how to love myself. She believed in me and taught me to believe in myself.

**Julie Washington**

Chief Marketing Officer  
Champion Petfoods

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 13**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I first entered the pet food industry in 1991, driven by my passion for science and desire to find ways to improve the lives of pets and pet families. During an initial 12-year tenure at a leading pet food brand, I learned a lot about the industry, the market, products and processes, and pet lovers and their relationships with their furry companions.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** I consider myself the pet lovers' "champion"—championing their interests, their needs; understanding their lifestyles and desires for their pets' health and well-being.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** Two areas where the pet industry has notable opportunity for focus and progress are transparency and diversity/inclusion. Consumers have greater interest in knowing what's in the kibble, where it was grown and sourced, how it was handled, the cooking and safety processes involved and nutritional outcomes. The second area involves diversity and inclusion opportunities for both women and people of color within the industry and among its management ranks.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** My most influential role model is my mother, Sulie Spencer. She is a beacon of inspiration, a believer in possibilities and the best cheerleader a person could have. As a four-time cancer survivor she has taught me how to persevere in the face of adversity, how to love fully and live joyfully, the importance of serving others and of humility and gratitude.

**Melissa Verplank**

President  
Melissa Verplank Enterprises

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 40**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** I was never the greatest student in school but I was passionate about animals. Dogs. Cats. Horses. I was also very competitive. I had a high school counselor who told me, "When you find what you love to do—you are going to be unstoppable." She was right. My first job in my teens was at a local kennel. When a grooming position opened up, they turned to me to fill the position. I've never looked back. I followed my passion for pets while maintaining my competitive spirit.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Helping people follow their dreams of working professionally with pets. The Paragon School of Pet Grooming, Inc. has helped thousands of people turn a simple love of dogs into a rewarding career. White Dog Enterprises, Inc. publishes my award-winning books, Notes from the Grooming Table and The Theory of Five, along with other educational publications. Learn2Groom, Inc. has over 600 pet grooming videos in its streaming library. Our Training Partners are all leading industry experts. The lessons are accessible anytime and anywhere there is internet access. Whiskers Resort & Pet Spa is West Michigan's premier luxury pet care facility, handling as many as 250 to 300 pets daily.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** Education. Education. Education. It's everything when it comes to pet services. Professionalism, training and advanced education will yield better services for the pet and pet parent. The more polished and knowledgeable we are only reflects positively on ourselves—and our industry.

**Eileen Wilmarth**

Director of Marketing  
Pet Food Experts

**Number of Years in Pet Industry: 28**

**What inspired you to get into the pet industry?** Fate would have it that a friend of mine told me about an opportunity at a local distributor. My first position was part-time while my kids were young. Pet Food Experts was pretty small at the time and I grew in my career as the company expanded. I never turned down the opportunity to wear a different hat, and I have been fortunate to wear many.

**What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners?** Bringing the best brands to our retailers has been the most rewarding. Our motto is "When You Win, We Win," and that's simply the truth. We want our independent retailers and vendor partners to grow, thrive and win every day! As the director of marketing, my team is focused on bringing helpful messaging to retailers in a fun and engaging way.

**What issues do you think need more attention from the pet industry and why?** Protecting the brick-and-mortar retailer from online low-pricing continues to be the biggest threat in my mind. Manufacturers need to strictly enforce Map and iMap policies. It's a challenge for the independent pet specialty retailers to compete with online pricing while maintaining overhead of a store.

**Who do you consider your most influential role model and why?** The one person I've learned the most from in this industry is Michael Baker. He has not only been a wonderful role model, but he has fostered a company culture that gives our team the autonomy to do what we think is best for Pet Food Experts and our partners. He has taught me that relationships are the most important thing.