



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Pet Advocacy Network Awards Recognize Outstanding Contributions to the Pet Care Community**

Orlando, Fla. - March 22, 2023 – Six individuals and organizations have been recognized by the Pet Advocacy Network for their notable achievements towards promoting responsible pet care, advancing animal health and wellbeing, and advocating on behalf of pets. The awards were presented during a reception following the organization’s annual meeting on March 21 in Orlando, Fla.

“We take pride in recognizing these outstanding leaders and organizations who have made significant contributions to advance the positive impact of the responsible pet care community on pets and pet ownership,” said Pet Advocacy Network Board Chair John Mack, founder and CEO of Reptiles by Mack in Xenia, Ohio. “Their dedication to promoting responsible pet care and animal health and wellbeing has made an important impact on the lives of pets and their owners.”

Jim Seidewand, owner of Pet World in Rochester, New York, was presented with the **Nancy G. Knutson Lifetime Achievement Award** for over 50 years of service to the Pet Advocacy Network, New York State pet owners, and the responsible pet care community. One of Pet Advocacy Network’s hardest-working volunteers, Seidewand served on the board of directors for decades, where he chaired the Government Affairs Committee and was an integral part of the team that developed best practices guides for pet retailers. A prominent leader on pet issues in New York, he helped shape the state’s pet warranty law and its approach to invasive species, and has also represented responsible pet shops throughout the ongoing effort to defend pet sales.

The **Allan L. Levey Chair's Award of Excellence** was given to Dr. Whitney Miller, Petco chief veterinarian, in recognition of her work on Pet Advocacy Network’s Zoonosis Committee and her efforts to promote responsible pet care. Miller has been a vocal advocate for the importance of veterinary care and has worked to foster closer collaboration between the veterinary service community and the pet trade.

Patrick Donston, president of Absolutely Fish in Clifton, New Jersey, received the **Pet Advocacy Network Ambassador of the Year Award** for his unwavering commitment to promoting the organization's mission. An active member of the Membership Committee, Donston consistently pursues new members and leverages relationships that have helped the organization grow.

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Lewis "Buddy" Waskey of the American Federation of Aviculture was presented with the **Pet Advocate of the Year Award** for his legislative efforts. Waskey was key to Pet Advocacy Network's work to increase communication and collaboration with the avian breeding community in advance of the USDA's new avian regulations release and helped build the relationships necessary to effectively address the regulations and their impact on breeders, retailers, distributors, and manufacturers. His 40 years of experience as a breeder and exhibitor of birds have made him an especially effective voice when engaging elected officials.

The North American Veterinary Community (NAVC) received the **Pet Care Community Leaders of the Year Award**. The 40th anniversary celebration of VMX in 2023 broke previous attendance records by more than 50 percent, including 9,500 first-time attendees, and offered over 1,300 hours of continuing education that helps the veterinary care community provide better care to animals. They also launched the Embrace advocacy tool that helps animal care professionals learn about legislation impacting pet health and engage with lawmakers.

**The Power of Pets Award** was presented to the "Don't Forget the Pets" campaign by Red Rover, Greater Good, and PetSmart Charities. This joint initiative helps human service organizations and animal shelters create community-based collaborative programs to support both people and pets in crisis. Organizations can learn about fundraising strategies, human services, animal welfare, and building techniques to better accommodate the pets of domestic violence survivors and unhoused populations.

"We commend these honorees for their dedication to pets, pet owners and the responsible pet care community," said Mike Bober, president and CEO of the Pet Advocacy Network. "From helping shape positive legislation to providing education and resources to fostering strategic collaborations, their work serves as inspiration to us all."

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### **About Pet Advocacy Network**

The [Pet Advocacy Network](#) connects the experience and expertise of the responsible pet care community to lawmakers and governing bodies, advocating for legislative and regulatory priorities at the local, state, federal and international levels. Since 1971, the organization has worked to promote animal well-being and responsible pet ownership, foster environmental stewardship, and ensure access to healthy pets, including small animals, cats, dogs, fish, reptiles and birds. Pet Advocacy Network members include retailers, companion animal suppliers, manufacturers, wholesale distributors, manufacturers' representatives, pet hobbyists, and other trade organizations.

