



## MPA member spotlight

By Jeanne Towar

*Jeanne is an MPA board member and retired journalist who interviews MPA members for our monthly Spotlight.*

Pet Angel Cat Adoption & Rescue is true to its name. Under the leadership of mother-daughter team Nancy and Abby Engel, the shelter and its volunteers are truly angels for the homeless cats of Frankenmuth.

Assisted by full-time office cat Arthur (pictured with Abby Engel), the two ladies work at the shelter every weekday, along with more than 30 dedicated angel volunteers who help feed, socialize and clean up after the cats and kittens in their care.



“Arthur is the real boss, but doesn’t have thumbs, so he can’t sign checks,” Abby said. “Mom does the office thumb-signing work.”

Pet Angel got its start in 2004 when Nancy and husband Jim Engel found two mama cats with 11 kittens in their backyard. The kittens were born on May 17, 2004, the day Nancy’s mother passed away.

“My mom taught me to love animals, so I took this as some kind of sign,” Nancy said. A neighbor who was involved with animal rescue also encouraged her to get involved.

After providing TNR for the cat colony and finding the kittens loving homes, word got out. Soon, the family was helping others who needed cats rehomed by caring for the felines in their own home and from their own pocketbooks.

The following year, the small rescue moved to their current location, a seven-room facility, most of which is free-roaming. As a 501(c)3 no-kill shelter, Pet Angel has found loving, forever homes for some 2,000 cats and kittens since their inception.

Nancy now serves as the organization’s president and Jim as treasurer. He is also the chief operating officer of the Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn Lodge, so the family is deeply involved in the Frankenmuth community.

Daughter Abby started helping at Pet Angel when she was just 9 years old.

In 2018, she was crowned as the Frankenmuth Bavarian Festival Princess and graduated from college during her yearlong reign. To be able to fulfill her duties as princess, she needed a job that provided flexibility. That turned out to be Pet Angel, where she found her true calling.

Now, at age 26 with a degree in communications and a minor in professional and technical writing, Abby is Pet Angel's executive director. Her degrees have served her well with publicizing the rescue.

Prior to Abby coming on board as an employee, Pet Angel used a few social media platforms and sites, such as Petfinder and Adopt-A-Pet, but she has taken these sites and others to a new level. Her writing skills are evident in posts on the adoption sites and Facebook. Her video skills are seen daily on Instagram Stories and in Facebook Live.

Abby's biggest social media accomplishment was accidental. During the 2020 pandemic quarantine, Abby started a TikTok. A video she made at Pet Angel went viral and she changed her TikTok from general to all about cat rescue. Since then, she has become a micro-influencer with more than 180,000 followers.

Thanks to these social media platforms, Abby and Pet Angel are able to educate the public on important issues like declawing and pet health, along with featuring cats available for adoption.

Abby would love to have you along for the ride on Pet Angel's social media pages. You can find her on Instagram and TikTok under @aceengel and you can also find Pet Angel on Facebook by searching "Pet Angel Cat Adoption and Rescue" or just @PetAngelAdopt.

"My goal in life is to help people and make a difference in this world," Abby said. "I feel like I am making a difference, not just for animals, but for the people who adopt them."

Pet Angel Cat Adoption & Rescue is located at 380 List St. in Frankenmuth.

## *Cat-friendly Alternatives to Declawing*

Join us on **Thursday, January 20 at 6 p.m. ET** for "Cat-friendly Alternatives to Declawing" with cat behaviorist, Jess Vankoningsveld.

Topics:

- Tools that can help teach your cat to scratch in appropriate places.
- Ways to train your cat to consistently use scratching posts and surfaces.
- How to choose the right kind of scratching surface for your cat.
- In-home enrichment to help with mind stimulation and energy sometimes associated with scratching out of boredom.
- Tips on nail trimming.

Jess will answer your questions LIVE via Zoom!

Can't attend? Register anyway and we will send you a link to the recording.

### **Jess Vankoningsveld**

Jess began her career in animal welfare in 2001 at Humane Society of Huron Valley. She started as an animal care technician, moved to cruelty investigator, then advanced to supervisor and intake staff for eight years before launching an official cat program. For 12 years, Jess has been modifying the cat program to improve efficiency and effectiveness, while working to save as many lives as possible. Jess works with volunteers and staff daily to continue improving their cat program by creating and updating processes, and to improve the quality of life for the cats in their care. Jess is a member of the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants and has completed Fear Free® training.



## ***About Michigan Pet Alliance***

### **MPA Vision:**

To achieve the best quality of life for Michigan's companion animals.

### **MPA Mission:**

To work in collaboration and speak with a single voice to eliminate abuse and neglect of Michigan's companion animals and to save all healthy and treatable homeless companion animals through training, technical assistance, education, and advocacy.

For more information:

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Michigan Pet Alliance is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization as defined by the IRS (EIN 20-0399162) and is a Guidestar Exchange Platinum Participant.



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