



MPA member spotlight

By Jeanne Towar

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

For as long as she can remember, Diana Newman has loved animals. Growing up, cats and dogs were always a part of her home.

The family lived a block off the busy main street of Bellevue, Michigan, where a parking lot and alley behind the businesses were a dumping ground for unwanted felines.



“My mother had always loved cats and it broke her heart to see them in danger from cars on the busy street,” Newman said. “She did her best to feed and care for them.”

Little surprise that Newman would grow up wanting to take care of cats herself. She almost always has at least one kitten on her lap, especially during the spring and summer kitten season. Newman takes them home from her volunteer job as president of Companion Cats Inc. in Battle Creek.

I interviewed Newman on a chilly fall day. As we were speaking, she was holding two 3-week-old bottle babies who had been rejected by mama cat. They were too young to eat on their own and needed to be fed every two to three hours. As soon as Newman is sure kittens are going to live, they go to foster homes and new bottle babies take their place.

Many years ago, when she started volunteering for Alley Cat Angels in Battle Creek, volunteer veterinarians were spaying and neutering just 12 cats per month.

“That’s good, but it’s not going to solve the problem; it’s not enough,” Newman thought.

She broke away to start Companion Cats, whose original mission was to spay and neuter and find suitable homes for unowned cats. The organization spayed or neutered 1,073 cats in its first 10 years with one part-time, paid veterinarian and a couple of vet techs. Now, an adoption-only center, the spay/neuter responsibilities are provided by Eaton County Humane Society (ECHS). ECHS is a low-cost spay/neuter clinic and

wellness center that has spayed/neutered more than 9,000 cats and several hundred dogs since June 2018.

ECHS is one of the legacy members that provided seed money to launch Michigan Pet Alliance, whose goal is to speak with one voice to achieve the best quality of life for Michigan's companion animals.

"I'm so excited about MPA and wish I had more time to put into it," Newman said. "I'm working with the Education and Training Committee to focus on cats, and also contributing to the digital library for other members to access information about cats."

Newman started her career as a dental hygienist, then went on to become the grants program manager at Western Michigan University while studying there for bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in public administration, which she completed at age 50. Her last paid position was as the director of Barry County Animal Shelter.

When she finally retired five years ago, she had more time to devote to her beloved cats. Now, at age 75, she is not only the volunteer president of Companion Cats, she is also the volunteer director of Eaton County Humane Society.

"It's what I do, and I'll keep doing it as long as I physically can," Newman said. "It's my passion."

Eaton County Humane Society is located at 129 N. Main Street in Olivet. Its Companion Cats sister organization is at 29 Hoag Street in Battle Creek.

Dog body language webinar: Nov. 17

Join us on **Wednesday, November 17 at 6 p.m. ET** for "Unlock the Secrets of Dog Body Language" with Lisa Rabine, ABCDT, one of Michigan's leading shelter dog trainers.

Topics of discussion:

- How shelters, rescues and fosters can communicate with dogs to better recognize their needs
- Understand a dog's personality to help with stress reduction and future placement
- Reduce dog bites

Lisa will answer your questions LIVE via Zoom!

This webinar is a prerequisite for our February webinar, "Safely Introduce Dogs at Home or in Shelter".

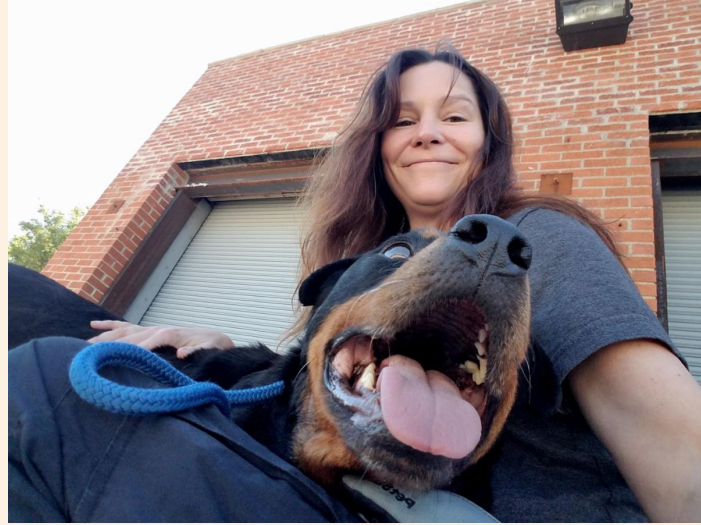
Can't attend? Register anyway and we will send you a link to the recording.

[Register](#)

Lisa Rabine, ABCDT

Lisa has volunteered or

been employed in municipal and nonprofit animal shelters throughout the state of Michigan for nearly 15 years. She is a certified canine trainer through Animal Behavior College with a focus on canine behavior modification programs, animal enrichment, assessing behavior in shelter environments, and



community education and outreach. Lisa also served as vice president and lead program facilitator for 13 years for Teacher's Pet: Dogs and Kids Learning Together, an intervention program that pairs troubled youth with hard-to-adopt shelter dogs for a multi-week workshop in positive, reward-based dog training and behavior modification in an effort to make the dogs more adoptable and to empower at-risk youth to improve in the areas of empathy, patience, impulse control, perseverance and hope. Lisa joined Michigan Pet Fund Alliance in 2017, traveling the state to provide in-shelter training for staff and volunteers.

2021 MPA award and grant recipients

This year, for the best practice award, we asked home-based rescues and shelters to tell us what they learned/instituted as a result of COVID-19 that they found to be a practice that they would permanently add to their ongoing operations. **Michele's Rescue** in Grand Rapids and **Ingham County Animal Control & Shelter** were the recipients of the award, earning \$1,500 cash each and a plaque of recognition. Michele's Rescue instituted a foster-to-adopt program, now allowing any potential adopter to be a foster first and providing a trial period. Ingham County took advantage of the time it remained closed to the public during the pandemic to make changes to enrich the lives of animals in the shelter by instituting the Fear Free program. Changes that took place reduced the length of stay for both cats and dogs and resulted in a much quieter, healthier environment for animals, volunteers and staff.

Upper Peninsula Animal Welfare Shelter (UPAWS) will receive the shelter assessment grant and **Humane Animal Treatment Society (HATS)** will receive the training grant. UPAWS will take what they learn from the assessment to help them prepare their 2022 strategic plan and HATS wants to increase their staff's canine knowledge to improve their standards of care.

Congratulations 2021 MPA Award and Grant recipients!

Member events

One of the benefits to [becoming a member of](#)



[Michigan Pet Alliance](#) is that we promote your events. Nonprofit member organization [Paws for Life Rescue](#) is currently hosting its second annual [Kibbles & Bids virtual silent auction](#). You can sign-up with just your name, email and phone number or you can click Sign-up with Facebook. Bid by text or on the auction site. More than 370 items

and packages are available, including dog daycare, training and enrichment, everything for the most spoiled dogs and cats, a Compassion Fatigue basket, 21+ spirits, gift cards, travel packages, virtual experiences and much more. The auction ends this Friday, Nov. 12 at 8 p.m. ET. and winning bidders will be notified to schedule pick-up or delivery. Many items are available for free shipping. All proceeds benefit the homeless pets of Paws for Life.

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](#).



Contributions are tax deductible.

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