



October member spotlight

By Jeanne Towar

Reva Laituri grew up in the country and had no one her age to play with, except when cousins visited her grandparents who lived nearby.

“My best friends and playmates were dogs and cats that lived with us and nearby relatives,” she said. “During those early years, I witnessed a lot of cruelty toward them, but was too young to do anything about it. I shed a lot of tears over a lot of dogs and a few cats.”

“I often think of those dogs and cats I didn’t help and try every day to make their lives mean something. I don’t know that it will ever be enough, but I do know it hasn’t been for lack of trying.”

Laituri has certainly done more than try. For more than 40 years she has volunteered for Upper Peninsula Animal Welfare Society (UPAWS) wherever needed, from a beginning of working in the office and manning the reception desk to later performing the many duties of an executive director during job vacancies. She is UPAWS longest serving board member at 24 non-consecutive years and has held several offices, including nine years as president, a post she currently holds.

During her tenure, UPAWS has gone from a save rate of just 37% to saving 97% of the animals in UPAWS' care. In 2019, a new \$3.6 million state-of-the-art shelter was completed under her leadership, thanks in part to a \$1.6 million bequest from UPAWS supporters Philip and Ruth Spade, for whom the new shelter is named.

In August, the UPAWS board of directors hired Bill Brutto as its executive director. Brutto, who for the past five years was the director of the Grand Rapids Kroc Center for The Salvation Army, was with the U.S. Army for 18 years, attaining the rank of captain. His family - wife Taylor and kids Joshua, 11, and Addison, 9 - love the outdoors and Brutto had always wanted to work with animals, so this was the perfect opportunity to do both.

“Having animals in our home changed my kids' whole attitude,” said Brutto about adopting two dogs. “I realized how important it is to give your children the responsibility of taking care of another living creature.”



Michigan Pet Alliance (MPA) recently announced the award of a shelter assessment grant, valued at \$3,000, to UPAWS as part of MPA's 2021 awards program.

"We believe the assessment will be very beneficial to our shelter, as we will use those results and recommendations as part of our 2022 strategic plan," Brutto said. "Several of our goals will be to identify new ways or improvements in our daily operations to help us continue to meet the needs of each animal that comes through our doors, to rehabilitate each animal for better physical and mental health, and place our animals in their forever homes."

"In areas where we are doing well, we would like to celebrate and recognize the individuals who made these successes possible – people like Riva who show such exceptional care for animals. Her number one priority is always what's best for them."

UPAWS is located at 815 South State Highway M553 in the city of Gwinn.

Separation anxiety webinar: Oct. 19

Register today for our next webinar: "Understanding Separation Anxiety: Achieving Success with Training and Adoption" with Jane Wolff of Good Wolff Dog Training on Thursday, October 19th at 6 p.m. Eastern.

Jane will answer all of your questions LIVE via Zoom about this panic disorder that affects millions of dogs.

What: Understanding Separation Anxiety: Achieving Success with Training and Adoption

When: October 19, 2021 | 6 - 7 p.m. Eastern

Who: Everyone is welcome.

- Member Fee: \$10
- Non-Member Fee: \$25
- No refunds. Exchanges allowed.

Why: Separation anxiety affects almost 20% of dogs in the US and is a common reason for rehoming. Though a huge quality of life issue for dogs and their people, the good news is dogs can overcome separation anxiety! Join us for this webinar to learn more about alone-time behavior concerns, training and the best ways to help separation anxiety dogs in shelters and rescues get adopted.

[Join MPA now](#) and receive the benefit of reduced fees for this and future webinars.

Jane Wolff CTC, CSAT, CPDT-KA

Jane Wolff is a Certified Separation Anxiety Trainer, a Certified Professional Dog Trainer, and graduated with honors from the Academy for Dog Trainers (CTC). She is co-owner of Good Wolff which is based in Ypsilanti. She has been working primarily with separation anxiety since 2018, but also enjoys working with fearful and anxious dogs. Jane loves helping her clients

through stressful and sometimes complex behavior issues while keeping it fun and easy.



Register

Meet our CEO



What happens when a prosecuting attorney from Nebraska ends up in Michigan?

He joins MPA as our CEO and immediately starts to build the strongest association of animal advocates our state has ever seen.

After our search committee combed through well over 150 applications, interviewed and curated a list of top candidates, Joe Dobesh, that Nebraska prosecutor and experienced community advocate, got the call and began his new venture on July 1.

Joe's passion for animals has been passed down for generations in his family. His father is a veterinarian, along with three uncles and an aunt. His brother is currently applying to veterinary school. And, while growing up, Joe's home was often a foster home for the homeless animals in his father's care.

Joe is no stranger to Michigan, having attended and graduated from Western Michigan University Cooley Law School. We might add, magna cum laude. Yup, smart guy. And, he comes with a super smart other half. Joe's wife Kate is a surgical resident at Henry Ford Hospital and plans to continue her fellowship in Detroit. Joe was willing to give up his elected position in Nebraska, a position that he loved, for a new position in Michigan if it perfectly fit his passion, strengths and best put to use his skills. Joe felt our CEO position did just that.

As prosecutor, Joe took pride in holding accountable animal abusers and puppy mills. He also advocated for animals at the state and local level. When Valparaiso, Nebraska, was prepared to pass an ordinance authorizing municipal employees to poison and shoot homeless cats, Joe immediately made it clear that any action taken pursuant to such a policy would be aggressively prosecuted. He then went above and beyond the role of prosecutor and mobilized advocates around the state to provide options to address the underlying concerns and secured no-cost spay and neuter services.

Joe also has invaluable experience educating and motivating policymakers, a skill set we very much need in Michigan to update and enact laws for the care and protection of companion animals.

The MPA board of directors is thrilled to have Joe join us. If you have the opportunity, give him a shout out and welcome at Joe@michiganpet.org

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:

313-731-2244

info@michiganpet.org

michiganpet.org

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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