

Board of Directors

Chairperson:
Deborah Schutt
Schutt & Company

Treasurer:
Cheryl Gault
Bank of Auburn Hills

Secretary:
Denise Odigie

Carol Eberhardt

Lin Gardiner

Dan Godek
Royal Oak Shelter

Susan Jeroue
Manager, Macomb
County Shelter

Karen Mountz

Larry Nathan
MI Pug Rescue

Larry Obrecht,
Manager
Oakland Pet Adoption
Center

Jeanne Towar

Harry Ward
Manager
Detroit Animal Control
and Care

Advisors

Gary Davison
Davison Associates

Charlie Langton
Langton & Associates

Kate Pullen
Director of Community
Initiatives
ASPCA

Joseph Sowerby
Founder - Meet Your
Best Friend at the Zoo
and
Pet-a-Palooza

Rich Strenger
Richard Strenger
Attorney at Law

Tracy Zawaski
Rader, Fishman &
Grauer PLLC

Linda Wasche
LW Marketworks, Inc.



Dedicated to making Michigan a no more homeless pets state.

March 12, 2010

Mr. Donald Koivisto
Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 30017
Lansing, Michigan
48909

Dear Mr. Koivisto:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of the Michigan Pet Fund Alliance to express our outrage at the lack of sensitivity and transparency in the Competitive Companion Animal Welfare Fund Grant Program prepared by your department. We believe that the program as presently fashioned **lacks vision** and is a **betrayal** of trust to those citizens that supported this fund with their contribution. We can assure you that no one contributed money to the Fund to outfit a private veterinarian's office with spay/neuter equipment and supplies. An especially egregious provision of the existing program is funding to teach euthanasia. No one contributed to this fund to teach anyone how to kill animals.

We respectfully request immediate revisions to both the Grant Program and Process.

In 2007 when the Michigan Animal Welfare Fund was approved by the Michigan Legislature and signed by the Governor, many of us involved in Animal Welfare cheered at the prospect of establishing a fund to help us battle pet overpopulation and the resultant annual euthanasia of over 118,000 pets in Michigan. We immediately wrote to your predecessor volunteering our assistance in crafting a grant program that would establish a vision and goals as outlined by the legislation and an effective transparent competitive program to distribute and account for those funds. We received no response.

In the summer of 2009, having learned that Mike DiBernardo of your staff was charged with developing the grant program, we contacted him – several times - volunteering our assistance and offering the expertise of some of our partners. We suggested a cross-section panel of experts to develop the criteria and review and select deserving applications. Mr. DiBernardo never responded to our offers of assistance nor did he respond to our written request for an answer of how the Department of Agriculture gathered public input in the grant program he crafted.

Specifically the following provisions of the grant program need to be addressed:

1. ***A clear and succinct vision needs to be established along with goals for the program.*** The number one purpose of the legislation is to promote sterilization and adoption of dogs and cats. Is the vision that all shelters sterilize all cats and dogs prior to adoption? Is there a specific goal of when this might occur (by 2020)? Is the vision that all healthy dogs and cats are adopted in Michigan shelters by a certain year? How will we know if this Fund is effective if there is no vision or goal?

2. ***Clarification is needed of what organizations are eligible.*** The current program limits the program to shelters licensed by MDA. However the legislation provides that *An organization exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the internal revenue code that is based in this state and whose primary purpose is to increase the number of dogs and cats that are sterilized and adopted.* Some of the most effective spay/neuter programs in Michigan (serving shelters, rescue organizations and low-income pet owners) are conducted by not-for-profit organizations that are not regulated MDA shelters. These organizations should be eligible for this program.

3. ***High Volume targeted Spay/Neuter programs should be an eligible program.*** National statistics indicate that 3% of the population is responsible for 80% of the unwanted/unintended pet births. There is no reason to believe that Michigan is different from the national average. Spay/Neuter programs targeting low-income families reduces shelter intake which can result in increased adoptions due to less competition and financial burden at the shelter.

4. ***Spay/Neuter funding is currently limited to paying private veterinary practitioners.*** Several shelters have staff (employee) veterinarians. These shelters were excluded from using existing staff and expanding their programs under the current grant description. In addition there are three not-for-profit clinics in the state that specialize in low cost, high volume spay/neuter that are extremely cost effective tackling the overpopulation problem of pets. Some of these clinics have transport programs. The current grant precludes shelters using these facilities and instead directs the spending toward facilities paying double or triple the cost, thereby lowering the grant impact.

5. ***The program does not include efforts to increase adoptions.*** Many shelters could increase adoptions by participating in adoption events, marketing existing animals, featuring their 'pet of the week' in newspapers and TV, participating at fairs and festivals but require funding for staffing, equipment (cages), marketing expertise, promotional material etc.

6. ***The program allowed for the purchase of equipment for private veterinarians.*** Private veterinarians should already have spay/neuter equipment that can be used to accommodate shelter animals. If a private veterinarian needs additional equipment to spay/neuter shelter animals the veterinarian should pay for it as part of the overhead and the cost of doing business rolled into the cost of each procedure.

7. The program gives preference to training sessions that include euthanasia methods, best practices, and procedures in Michigan to obtain a license to use sodium pentobarbital for euthanasia. Although we recognize the need for training for this purpose, we do NOT feel that the public contributed to this fund for this purpose. Sensitively crafted requirements might be acceptable as an encouragement to shelters currently gassing animals to transition to EBI.

8. The program limits animal welfare (including spay/neuter) education to training sessions. Limiting education to training sessions precludes informing/educating the masses. There are endless opportunities to educate and inform all segments of the population on a variety of animal welfare issues and topics. Why would we limit how it is performed? Results should be the measure.

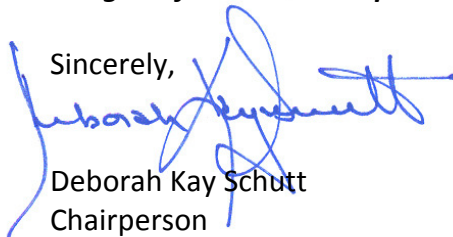
9. The program lacks transparency. Lacking from the program description is:

- Who is reviewing and recommending the funding of applications?
- What is the selection criteria?
- What is the program criteria?
- What are the expectations for sustainability of the programs/projects selected?
- How are the funds distributed – up front, partial with reporting, reimbursement?
- What is the timing for expenditure?
- What are the reporting requirements?

The Michigan Pet Fund Alliance was formed to bring 21st century best practices to Michigan Shelters and Companion Animal Rescue Organizations with the goal of making Michigan a *No More Homeless Pets State* (no-kill for healthy and treatable homeless companion animals). We encouraged our supporters to contribute to the Animal Welfare Fund and want to do so in the future. Contributors deserve a 21st century funding program, one in step with the trends of national animal welfare foundations.

We request a response to this correspondence. Again, we offer our assistance in fashioning a grant program which not only addresses the legislative intent but provides transparency, is designed for results and provides confidence to those that have contributed to the fund.

Sincerely,



Deborah Kay Schutt
Chairperson

cc: Michigan Pet Fund Board
Governor Jennifer Granholm
Michigan Legislature
Mike DiBernardo