



For Immediate Release

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## **Pet Industry Leaders Recognized at PIJAC's Top2Top**

Amelia Island, FL – There was no shortage of applause or “pup-a-razzi” for pet industry leaders at PIJAC’s (Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council) annual Top2Top Conference for the good deeds and accomplishments made on behalf of family and shelter pets and those who love them.

Laura Nativo, dog trainer and pet advocate, of Hallmark’s “Home & Family” presented eight awards, including:

**Pet Advocate of the Year – Marcie Whichard, Vice President of Animal Care and Education, Petco.** Marcie initiated Petco’s *Think Adoption First* program, which manages 3500 adoption partner relationships. Guiding the company’s Independent Animal Care Advisory Council, she provides leadership to 1200 stores nationwide to improve and maintain consistency in the care, health, sale and adoption of animals and pet services.

**Program Innovator of the Year – Chris Buerner, President, Quality Marine.** As a key member on industry standards-setting panels, Chris has raised the bar in the marine industry to conserve marine ecosystems and promote a responsible aquarium trade by developing a certification program for overseas fish collectors, collection areas and exporters.

**PIJAC Ambassador of the Year – Tom Edling, Vice President of Veterinary Medicine, Petco.** In addition to his oversight of the care of more than 200,000 pets at Petco, Tom is a leader in the field of health and well-being between humans and their pets. Obtaining his Masters in Public Health, Tom is the head of the PIJAC Zoonoses Committee, providing health and care information to the industry and the general public to prevent the potential transmission of disease from pets to humans.

**Pet Industry Leader of the Year – Doug Poindexter, President, World Pet Association.**

Doug has transformed the industry with his leadership skills – from creating the first of its kind *Aquatic Experience* show and serving on multiple pet industry boards to growing the World Pet Association (WPA), which now produces one of the top industry trade shows in the country. His successes have enabled WPA to donate millions of dollars to worthy industry causes such as the Coral Reef Foundation and the Pet Care Trust.

**Presidential Award of Excellence – Jim Boschee, CFO, World Pet Association.** Jim exemplifies the ultimate in leadership and volunteerism. As the head of the PIJAC Membership Development Committee, Jim has been instrumental in ensuring that every member of the pet industry has a voice in local, state and national legislation. He has built strategic partnerships, streamlined association practices, and fostered key alliances within the industry.

**Chairman’s Award of Excellence – Bob Vetere, President and CEO, American Pet Products Association.** Bob has used his tremendous leadership skills to align industry goals and create industry-wide initiatives, including the Pets Add Life (PAL) campaign and the Human Animal Bond Research Initiative (HABRI). Working with boards of directors, staff and industry associations, he has successfully furthered the interests of the pet industry and championed responsible pet ownership throughout the nation.

**Lifetime Achievement Award – Bill Brant, President, The Gourmet Rodent.** Bill’s passion and devotion to reptiles is evident in every aspect of his life. As an educator, entrepreneur, and state cabinet-level advisor, Bill’s achievements as an industry activist and successful business owner are legendary. His work on behalf of the reptile industry is exemplary and will benefit future reptile owners for years to come.

**Pet Effect Award – Nestlé Purina Petcare.** Showcasing the positive effect that the pet industry and pets have on each other, Nestle Purina Petcare is the embodiment of PIJAC’s *Pet Effect* program. Nestle Purina Petcare has invested \$30 million in pet welfare, helping nearly 2.2 million pets in pet welfare organizations. More than a half-million cats and dogs found homes through their Rally to the Rescue network of ambassadors alone. Their philosophy of creating a better world for pets and “the people who love them” promotes responsible pet ownership, wellness, education and outreach in our communities across the country.

“PIJAC congratulates all of this year’s extraordinary winners,” says Ken Oh, president and CEO of PIJAC. “The Top2Top conference is a tremendous reminder of how fortunate we are to have such stellar leadership, as well as champions for pets and pet owners.”

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The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) is comprised of members of the pet industry, nationwide, including pet food and pet supply manufacturers, veterinarians, retailers, pet day care and boarding facilities, groomers among others. PIJAC has supported pro-pet legislation and regulations for forty years. With over \$183 million donated in the form of food and general supplies, as well as direct monetary aid, the pet industry has helped more than 7.5 million homeless and shelter pets in the last two decades. More information can be found at [www.pijac.org](http://www.pijac.org).