Purina Cat Chow Honors Shelter Volunteer of The Year Contest Winner, Donates Nearly $100,000 To 50 Shelters Nationwide, Including $25,000 Shelter Renovation For Winning Volunteer

Liz Taranda, a Volunteer Representing Clifton Animal Shelter in New Jersey, Wins Top Honor; Four Runners-up Volunteers Recognized, Earn $5,000 Donations for Their Respective Shelters

ST. LOUIS, May 7, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- For more than 10 years, Liz Taranda has volunteered thousands of hours toward helping cats at the Clifton Animal Shelter in N.J. feel comfortable while staying at the shelter and find forever homes. In honor of her dedication, Purina Cat Chow is proud to announce that Taranda has been selected as its first-ever Shelter Volunteer of the Year Contest winner.

The Purina Cat Chow Shelter Volunteer of the Year Contest recognized and thanked the volunteers who tirelessly care for cats as they await their forever homes and work to make their temporary shelter homes gentler, less stressful places. Taranda's shelter, the Clifton Animal Shelter, will receive a $25,000 makeover to help improve its cat adoption areas in recognition of her dedication to the shelter cats. In addition, Purina Cat Chow will donate $5,000 to the shelter of each of the four volunteer Contest finalists.

Purina Cat Chow asked its 50 shelter partners – one in every state – to nominate *that* volunteer, the one who spends countless hours providing additional support to lessen the stress on the cats and kittens in the shelters' care while they await forever homes. From Feb. 23 to March 15, Purina Cat Chow invited consumers nationwide to vote for their favorite volunteer story daily. Consumer votes and a judging panel determined the top shelter volunteer and four runners-up volunteers. More than 272,000 votes were cast in support of the 50 shelter volunteers.

"We are excited to honor Liz Taranda as the Purina Cat Chow Shelter Volunteer of the Year. Her commitment to the Clifton Animal Shelter is unwavering. She truly cares about every cat that the organization supports," said Randy Beck, Purina Cat Chow brand director. "Each of the 50 nominated volunteers improves the lives of shelter cats every day. Their dedication to advancing cat welfare reflects the spirit of the Purina Cat Chow 'Building Better Lives' program."

The Purina Cat Chow Shelter Volunteer of the Year Contest donated nearly $100,000 among the 50 participating shelters – one in every state – in recognition of their volunteers in cash donations, cat food and cat care supplies to lessen the stress for cats living in shelters while they await their forever home. Every participating shelter received a $1,000 donation, Purina® Cat Chow® Gentle Formula brand food and cat care supplies.

Meet the Purina Cat Chow Shelter Volunteer of the Year, Liz Taranda

"I'm humbled to be the winner of the Purina Cat Chow Shelter Volunteer of the Year Contest," said Taranda. "Every cat we care for is important, and we often tell people that by adopting one cat they're really helping two cats because there's always another cat that needs a temporary home at the shelter. We have a great group of volunteers at the Clifton Animal Shelter and everyone here works hard to make sure every cat has a calm, comfortable stay with us."

For more than [illegible] Taranda has been a volunteer at the Clifton Animal Shelter, where she

For more than a decade, Taranda has been volunteering at the Clifton Animal Shelter because she sees the difference she is making in cats' lives and the organization. Taranda interviews and matches potential adopters to cats; ensures the cats are cleaned, fed and socialized; and oversees the medical care of each cat. In addition to caring for the cats, she is also instrumental in motivating fellow volunteers and spearheading the shelter's annual fundraising efforts.

Evelyn Ackley-Raps, president of the Clifton Animal Shelter, nominated Liz Taranda on behalf of the Friends of the Shelter, a nonprofit group that manages all adoptions and daily care of animals at the Clifton Animal Shelter.

"More shelters need volunteers like Liz Taranda, a one in a million volunteer who gives from the heart every day. She's been a part of our shelter for more than 10 years, helping hundreds of cats and supporting the shelter's day-to-day and long-term needs," said Ackley-Raps. "When Purina Cat Chow asked us to nominate our most outstanding volunteer, I immediately thought of Liz. But as she will tell you, she represents an amazing volunteer team here that is truly dedicated to helping cats find forever homes."

Renovating the Shelter of the Purina Cat Chow Shelter Volunteer of the Year

The renovations at the Clifton Animal Shelter will include front office renovations to improve guests' and adopters' experiences at the shelter; improvements to cat visitation areas; new windows for better insulation and ventilation; and fresh paint, furniture and epoxy coating on the floors. The goal of the renovations is to help create a gentler, less chaotic environment for the cats. Purina Cat Chow is providing a team of 15 volunteers to help complete the work including activities such as painting and revamping the front office on May 19.

In addition to the shelter makeover, the shelter will also receive Purina® Cat Chow® Gentle Formula brand food and cat care supplies.

The Clifton Animal Shelter specializes in finding forever homes for homeless cats, kittens, dogs and puppies and is committed to helping animals every step of the way, from screening to advising potential adopters. The shelter provides care for more than 800 animals, including 450 cats.

Meet the Purina Cat Chow Shelter Volunteer of the Year Runners-Up Volunteers

In addition to the top shelter volunteer, four runners-up volunteers each won a $5,000 donation for their respective shelter. The runners-up volunteers are:

- Bob Anderson, Cat Adoption Team (Portland, Ore.)
- Lauren Godail, Animal Rescue New Orleans (New Orleans)
- Barrett Henderson, Atlanta Humane Society (Atlanta)
- Desiree Muench, Hillside S.P.C.A. (Pottsville, Pa.)

The Purina Cat Chow Shelter Volunteer of the Year Contest is part of the brand's "Building Better Lives" program, an ongoing commitment to help improve the lives of cats through rescue, nutrition and adoption support. The brand works to support shelters and help more cats find forever homes. In three years, the Purina Cat Chow brand has donated nearly $600,000 to more than 100 local cat-focused shelters nationwide and helped improve the lives of more than 86,000 cats.

To learn more about the program or read about the winner and finalists stories visit,

www.catchow.com/buildingbetterlives.

About Nestle Purina PetCare

Nestle Purina PetCare promotes responsible pet care, community involvement and the positive bond between people and their pets. A premiere global manufacturer of pet products, Nestle Purina PetCare is part of Swiss-based Nestlé S.A., a global leader in nutrition, health and wellness.

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