Purina Partners with Mariska Hargitay and 'Fearless Girl' Sculptor to Highlight Need for More Pet-Friendly Domestic Violence Shelters

"Courageous Together" Statue by Artist Kristen Visbal Unveiled in NYC Depicting Brave First Step of a Domestic Abuse Survivor and Her Beloved Dog

NEW YORK, May 6, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- Purina is teaming up with actress, producer, advocate and founder of the Joyful Heart Foundation, Mariska Hargitay to unveil "Courageous Together," a new statue by renowned "Fearless Girl" artist Kristen Visbal depicting a woman and her dog, connected by a purple leash and taking a courageous first step forward, together, as survivors leaving their abuser. The statue was commissioned as part of the Purple Leash Project, an initiative led by Purina and the nonprofit, RedRover, that aims to help more domestic violence shelters become pet-friendly so that survivors with pets can escape abuse and heal together. Currently, fewer than 20% of domestic violence shelters in the U.S. allow pets.

"It's hard to overstate the life-saving role a pet can play in helping a victim survive the isolation that is so prevalent in abusive situations, and how wrenching the choice can be to leave a pet behind if a survivor decides to leave their abuser," said Mariska Hargitay. "I deeply admire the Purple Leash Project's vision and understanding of how a pet—and a leash—can be a lifeline for a survivor. I join them in their commitment to helping survivors reclaim lives of hope, possibility and joy—lives filled with the pets that have accompanied them on their journey!"

Startling statistics reveal that nearly half of domestic violence survivors delay leaving abusive situations because they cannot bring their pets with them. Pet lovers like Hargitay, whose family includes dog, Kaia and cat, Karma, know first-hand how powerful the human-pet bond can be and why leaving a pet behind is a choice no survivor should have to make.

"Courageous Together" compels passersby to confront the harsh reality of domestic violence and the unique challenges survivors face when seeking safety for themselves and their pets. Viewed publicly for the first time today in Times Square, Purina will be taking the statue to various locations across the country throughout the year, stopping first at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show May 11-14, 2024, in Queens, New York.

By raising awareness, Purina hopes to help drive fundamental change to the landscape of domestic violence services for survivors with pets, so no survivor has to choose between their own safety and the safety of their pet.

"Art has an incredible way of opening minds and starting conversations, and 'Courageous Together' is meant to do both as we continue to shine a light on the journey that domestic abuse survivors with pets face," said Nina Leigh Krueger, CEO of Purina. "We're proud to link arms with Kristen and Mariska who both use their respective art as a platform to drive meaningful conversations and positive change and who both fully embrace the mission of the Purple Leash Project."

Artist Kristen Visbal, best known for her "Fearless Girl" statue in New York's financial district, sees her latest project as another opportunity to empower women, and all survivors of abuse, to stand up for themselves and each other. Like so many people who learn about the connection between domestic abuse and pets,

Visbal, a pet lover, was inspired to cast survivors' courage and partnership with their pets in this larger-than-life statue.

"I envision this statue empowering those trapped in violence to step out – along with their pets – and to begin the healing process together," said Visbal. "Imagine the impact on domestic violence we, as supporters, could have if only we address the barriers which hinder survivor freedom!"

An innovative partnership between Purina and nonprofit RedRover, the Purple Leash Project provides resources and support to help domestic violence shelters across the U.S. become pet-friendly emerged from Purina's mission to strengthen the bond between pets and people, alongside RedRover's mission to provide care and support to animals and their owners during times of crisis. Since 2019, Purina and RedRover have provided 48 Purple Leash Project grants to domestic violence shelters across the country.

For more information about the Purple Leash Project and Purina's commitment to supporting survivors of domestic violence, or to make a donation visit Purina.com/Together.

About Purina
Nestlé Purina PetCare creates richer lives for pets and the people who love them. Founded in 1894, Purina has helped dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives by offering scientifically based nutritional innovations.

Purina manufactures some of the world's most trusted and popular pet care products, including Purina ONE, Pro Plan, Friskies and Tidy Cats. Our more than 11,000 U.S. associates take pride in our trusted pet food, treat and litter brands that feed 46 million dogs and 68 million cats every year. More than 500 Purina scientists, veterinarians, and pet care experts ensure our commitment to unsurpassed quality and nutrition.

Over the past five years, Purina has contributed more than $150 million towards organizations that bring, and keep, people and pets together, as well as those that help our communities and environment thrive. Purina is part of Nestlé, a global leader in Nutrition, Health and Wellness. For more information, visit purina.com or subscribe here to get the latest Purina news.

About RedRover
Since 1987, RedRover has focused on bringing animals out of crisis and strengthening the human-animal bond through emergency sheltering, disaster relief services, financial assistance, and education. To learn how RedRover is creating a more compassionate world, visit RedRover.org.

About Joyful Heart
Founded by Mariska Hargitay, Joyful Heart is a leading national organization with a mission to transform society's response to sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse, and support survivors' healing. For twenty years, the Joyful Heart Foundation has carried out its mission through an integrated program portfolio of awareness building and advocacy. Our work is paving the way for innovative approaches to healing for professionals and first responders working directly with survivors such as, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE), advocates, and law enforcement; igniting shifts in the way the public views and responds to sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse; and informing policies and legislation to ensure access to justice for survivors.

SOURCE Purina

For further information: Contact Info: Lindsey Shipley, PR Lead, Purina, Lindsey.Shipley@purina.nestle.com

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