Purina Honors Paige DeSorbo's Bravery in Speaking About Domestic Violence with Variety Courage Award

Molly Sims presented DeSorbo the Award at Variety's Power of Women event for sharing her experience as an abuse survivor and spotlighting the healing power of pets

ST. LOUIS, Sept. 24, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- Purina honored television personality, bestselling author and podcast host Paige DeSorbo with the 2026 Variety Courage Award at Variety's Power of Women event in Beverly Hills on Wednesday, September 23. Actress, model, entrepreneur and friend of DeSorbo's, Molly Sims, presented the award, recognizing DeSorbo's courage in speaking publicly about surviving an abusive relationship and using her platform to help others feel less alone.

In December 2024, DeSorbo shared on her *Giggly Squad* podcast that she experienced physical and emotional abuse in a relationship when she was 19 years old, an experience she had kept private for more than a decade. Her candid account addressed the shame and stigma survivors can face, while offering a message of recognition and hope to people navigating similar experiences.

In presenting the award, Sims praised DeSorbo for turning a deeply personal experience into a source of connection and hope for others.

"Paige intuitively knows that when we use our platforms and voices to champion one another, we all benefit," said Sims. "That instinct was part of what moved Paige to share experience of surviving an abusive relationship. She told her story not to get attention, but to direct attention to an issue too many women experience in silence... There is real power in making someone feel less alone."

She also reflected on DeSorbo's close bond with her cat, Daphne, who is a comforting constant in her everyday life and noted how the love and sense of safety pets provide underscores the importance of helping survivors and their pets escape and heal together.

For DeSorbo, Daphne represents the steady companionship and unconditional love that pets can bring. Their bond has also deepened DeSorbo's understanding of the role animals can play as people heal from trauma and why survivors should be able to seek safety without the impossible choice of being separated from the pets they love.

"When you've been through something that changes your understanding of what safety feels like, the little things that make you feel safe again can mean everything. For me, one of those things is my relationship with my cat, Daphne," DeSorbo said in her remarks. "No one should have to choose between their own safety and the pet who has helped them feel safe, loved and less alone."

That connection is at the heart of the Purple Leash Project. Through a partnership between Purina and nonprofit RedRover, the Purple Leash Project supports domestic violence shelters in creating pet-friendly spaces for survivors seeking safety with their pets. The need is significant: nearly half (48%) of domestic abuse survivors report delaying their decision to leave because they cannot take their pets with them, and only 20% of domestic violence shelters nationwide currently accept pets.

Since 2019, Purina and RedRover have awarded more than $2.2 million in Purple Leash Project grants to help create more safe spaces for abuse survivors on both ends of the leash. The organizations are working

toward a goal of providing one million safe nights for domestic abuse survivors and their pets by the end of 2030, so more people can seek safety without leaving the pets they love behind.

"Paige's decision to share her story is an extraordinary act of courage, one that can help people who have experienced or are experiencing abuse feel seen and less alone," said Nina Leigh Krueger, CEO of Purina. "Her bond with Daphne is also a meaningful reminder of the comfort, connection and sense of safety pets can bring as people heal from trauma. We are proud to honor Paige and to continue working through the Purple Leash Project to help create more safe spaces where survivors and the pets they love can escape and heal together."

The Variety Courage Award, presented by Purina, was awarded during Variety's 2026 Power of Women event presented by Lifetime, which celebrates women making an impact across entertainment, culture and their communities. As the third recipient of the award, DeSorbo joins Sarah Hyland and Aly Raisman, who were recognized in 2024 and 2025, respectively for their advocacy for abuse survivors.

This fall, Purina is making a donation to RedRover up to $500,000 to help expand access to pet-friendly spaces for domestic abuse survivors and the pets they love. To learn more, visit purina.com/escapetogether.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why did Purina honor Paige DeSorbo with the Variety Courage Award?
A: Purina honored DeSorbo for her courage in sharing her experience as an abuse survivor and for using her platform to help others feel seen, supported and less alone.

Q: Is Paige DeSorbo the first recipient of the Variety Courage Award?
A: No. Paige DeSorbo is the third annual recipient of the Variety Courage Award presented by Purina. The award was established in 2024, when Purina honored actor, advocate and domestic abuse survivor Sarah Hyland with its inaugural award at Variety's Power of Women event presented by Lifetime in Los Angeles. In 2025, Purina honored world champion gymnast, activist and author Aly Raisman. The award recognizes individuals who use their voices and experiences to help others feel seen, supported and less alone.

Q: What is the Purple Leash Project?
A: The Purple Leash Project was created by Purina and RedRover to help domestic violence shelters create pet-friendly spaces. Its goal is to help survivors seek safety without being separated from their pets.

Q: Why are pets important to people experiencing domestic violence?
A: Pets can provide companionship, comfort and a sense of safety during and after traumatic experiences. Many survivors delay leaving abusive situations because they are concerned about what will happen to their pets.

Q: How does the Purple Leash Project help survivors and their pets?
A: The project provides grants, resources and support to help domestic violence shelters accommodate pets and their owners. Since 2019, Purina and RedRover have awarded more than $2.2 million in grants to help create safe spaces for survivors and their pets .

Q: What is the Purple Leash Project's goal?
A: Purina and RedRover are working toward providing one million safe nights for domestic violence survivors and their pets by the end of 2030.

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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.

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About RedRover
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For further information: lindsey.shipley@purina.nestle.com

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