

# WOMEN *of* INFLUENCE 2019

**N**ow, more than ever, it's important to celebrate the accomplishments of females who have made a notable impact on the field in which they work. Pet Age is proud to present its fifth-annual Women of Influence Awards to honor 30 ambitious, hard-working females who are influential in the pet industry.

These women hold leadership positions at companies throughout the sector, including pet product manufacturers and retailers as well as businesses that provide

marketing and grooming services. This year's honorees include women who have followed in the footsteps of family members who already worked in the industry, while others have realized their dreams to establish their own companies. No matter the paths to their current destinations or their roles—with titles ranging from general manager to president, executive director, CEO and more—these women all share a deep love for animals.

The winners of this year's Women of Influence Awards explain to Pet Age what

inspired them to get into the industry and what they feel is their biggest contribution to the pet business and/or pet owners. They also offer the issues they believe need more attention in the sector, with responses including sustainability, regulatory compliance, education about safety and best practices, improved cooperation between vets and retailers/e-commerce businesses, community outreach programs, pet obesity, dental issues and transparency in nutrition.

In addition, these women reveal to Pet Age who they consider to be their most influential role model(s), whether it was a helpful colleague who taught them how to navigate the pet industry, or supportive parents who encouraged them to lead successful, meaningful lives while pursuing their career passions.

Congratulations to the well-deserving recipients of Pet Age's 2019 Women of Influence Awards! **PA**

## 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award: Laura "Peach" Reid

Pet Age's Women of Influence Lifetime Achievement Award is meant to recognize someone who has made major contributions to the pet industry, and this year we honor a game-changer and trailblazer in Laura "Peach" Reid.

A 2017 recipient of Pet Age's Women of Influence Award, Reid has worked at Fish Mart since its inception in 1974. Today, she is president and CEO of the company, which is the Northeast's largest domestic and import distributor of aquatic livestock, plants, invertebrates, reptiles, small animals, birds and live/frozen food. It services more than 500 retail stores.

She's also serving her second term as chairman of the board of directors for the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC). She has been a member of PIJAC since the early 1990s and, in March 2016, she made history by being the first woman to hold that position.

"When it came time to pick our first Board Chair after our reorganization, it was important to pick someone who represented our focus on the companion animals which make up the heart of the pet care community while also recognizing the need for someone with ex-



perience working with some of the biggest players out there," said Mike Bober, president and CEO of PIJAC. "Peach was the natural fit, and her leadership over the past three years has proven it time and time again."

During her 45 years in the pet industry, Reid has become known for her business leadership and community service. She has been involved in legislative issues for decades, serving on numerous boards and committees within PIJAC, including its legislative committee, executive committee and aquatic subcommittee. Prior to being elected as chairman of the board of directors for PIJAC, she

had served on the board and also held the office of secretary-treasurer for the council. She's also contributed countless hours of time and money to support important issues involving animal welfare.

"How fortunate I am," was Reid's reaction to being notified that she's the recipient of the 2019 Pet Age Women of Influence Lifetime Achievement Award. "To be able—for the past 45 years—to essentially just be me, my passionate self, doing what quickly evolved from a job to a career, to my calling... and to still be working alongside so many great people, some of whom are my very best friends, to learn and grow at my own pace, to pretty much be the captain of my ship... and to be where I am today. I am so very grateful."

This recognition is one of many that have been bestowed upon Reid, who, in 1998, was honored as a "Woman of Substance" in the Connecticut Post. In 2015, she received PIJAC's "Chairman's Award of Excellence" in recognition of her tireless work on issues affecting the entire pet industry at the state and local levels across Connecticut. The company has also been recognized for its impact in the pet industry, including receiving the Eastern Companion Animal Distributor of the Year Award by Marshal Pet Products in 2016.