

Unleashing Courage: Making Meaningful Change for Domestic Violence Survivors and their Pets

Purina's Purple Leash Project aims to help transform the domestic violence landscape to save lives at both ends of the leash.

By Joe Toscano, Vice President, Trade & Industry Development at Purina

Every year, millions of Americans experience domestic violence. For many survivors, a pet is more than just a companion—it is a source of comfort, resilience, and unconditional love. Yet, for nearly half of survivors, the presence of a beloved pet becomes a heartbreaking barrier to safety. Research shows that 48% of domestic abuse survivors delay leaving a dangerous situation because they cannot take their pet with them, and fewer than one in five domestic violence shelters nationwide currently accept pets.

This stark reality is what inspired Purina to launch the Purple Leash Project in partnership with nonprofit RedRover. The goal is simple but urgent: To create a future where no one must choose between escaping abuse and protecting their pet. Since its inception in 2019, the Purple Leash Project has provided more than 55 grants to shelters across the country, funding everything from outdoor play yards to indoor housing that accommodates both survivors and their pets. Thanks in part to these efforts, the number of pet-friendly domestic violence shelters has more than doubled in just five years, rising from 8% to nearly 20% today.

Awareness is a vital part of creating meaningful change in the domestic violence landscape. To shine a light on and help reduce the stigma around being a domestic violence survivor, we partnered with *Variety*® to honor actor, advocate and survivor Sarah Hyland with the first-ever *Variety Courage Award presented by Purina* at the annual *Variety Power of Women* event in Los Angeles last October. This recognition underscored both her personal journey and her commitment to raising visibility for survivors who face the painful choice of leaving a pet behind.

Most recently, we were privileged to partner with Sarah again to create the *Courageous Together Collection*, which launched this September, with the intention of inspiring courage, sparking conversations and reducing the stigma that too often surrounds domestic abuse. Available exclusively at



shop.PurpleLeashProject.com, the collection features items for pets and people, including necklaces, and bag charms designed in partnership with cause-focused jewelry brand Coastal Caviar. One hundred percent of every purchase from the collection benefits and is a donation to RedRover in support of the Purple Leash Project, directly funding shelter improvements so survivors and pets can escape—and heal—together.

We are proud of the progress we've made but know there is much more work to be done. Retailers also have an important role to play in advancing this mission. Grocery stores, in particular, are uniquely positioned at the heart of their communities, serving as daily touchpoints for millions of families. By engaging with the Purple Leash Project, retailers can help spread awareness, raise funds and provide meaningful support to local shelters. Opportunities include featuring specially marked Purina products, hosting in-store donation and round-up programs, or working with your Purina reps to secure Purple Leash Project merchandising displays.

We've seen retailers and customers make meaningful change in their own local communities by engaging with shelters in their own backyards—from organizing supply drives, offering retail gift cards to support shelters and survivors and more.

The impact of this work extends far beyond corporate philanthropy. By supporting survivors and their pets, retailers can foster trust, demonstrate leadership in social responsibility and make a direct difference in the lives of vulnerable families within their own communities.

Domestic violence may often remain hidden, but together we can bring visibility, compassion, and change. Purina invites retail partners to stand with us in this mission. To learn more about the Purple Leash Project, access resources, or make a donation, reach out to your Purina rep or visit Purina.com/Courage.

Because no survivor should ever have to choose between their own safety and the safety of their pet.

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