Creating Change at Both Ends of the Leash: How Retailers Can Help Make Communities Safer for People and Pets

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

The Purple Leash® Project is helping Purina® transform the domestic violence landscape, and retailers have an important role to play.

For millions of people experiencing domestic violence, leaving an unsafe situation is not as simple as walking out the door. When a beloved pet is involved, the decision can become even more complicated. In fact, nearly half of abuse survivors delay leaving because they cannot take their pets with them – yet just 20% of U.S. domestic abuse shelters currently accept pets.

At Purina, we believe pets and people are better together. No one should have to choose between their own safety and the safety of their pet. That belief inspired Purina and our nonprofit partner RedRover® to launch the Purple Leash Project in 2019, with the goal of helping more domestic abuse shelters become pet friendly so survivors and their pets can escape and heal together.

Since its creation, the Purple Leash Project has provided more than 65 grants to domestic violence shelters, helping fund the improvements and resources needed to accommodate pets. These grants are helping shelters create more safe spaces where survivors can arrive with the pets they love, rather than face the impossible choice of leaving them behind.

Awareness is a key part of creating meaningful change in the domestic violence landscape. Purina works to elevate the issue on a national scale, including through its partnership with Variety to create the Variety Courage Award, presented by Purina. Since 2024, the award has honored advocates for domestic abuse survivors at the Variety Power of Women event in Los Angeles. Purina will continue the award in 2026 at the Variety Power of Women event in Los Angeles this September, helping amplify the voices of survivors and advocates while challenging the stigma that so many survivors face.

But raising awareness is only the beginning. Retailers have an opportunity to turn visibility into action by helping to share this important cause with their customers and communities.

Starting September 1 through November 15, Purina and its brands will support the Purple Leash Project through a special consumer giving program. For every purchase of specially marked Purina packages during the promotion period, Purina will donate $0.05 to RedRover, up to $500,000. This creates an opportunity for retailers to engage their shoppers around a meaningful cause while helping fund safe spaces for survivors and their pets.



Retailers can also make an impact beyond the point of purchase. By partnering with Purina and the Purple Leash Project, retailers can help raise awareness and connect customers with resources and opportunities to support survivors in their own communities.

There are many ways to get involved, including in-store and online merchandising, promotions, donation or round-up programs, supply drives, retail gift card donations and volunteer partnerships with local shelters. We've seen retailers and customers create meaningful change through these efforts, and shelters tell us that strong community support can provide the resources and encouragement they need to expand their services, including becoming pet friendly.

For retailers, supporting the Purple Leash Project is an opportunity to do more than demonstrate social responsibility. It is a chance to use their reach, resources and community relationships to address a critical need while supporting the people and pets who live in the communities they serve.

We are proud of the progress we've made with RedRover, but with just 20% of domestic abuse shelters currently accepting pets, there is still significant work ahead. Creating more pet-friendly shelters requires continued investment, awareness and collaboration across communities.

Together, retailers, brands, nonprofits and consumers can help create a future where no survivor has to choose between their own safety and the safety of their pet.

To learn more about the Purple Leash Project and ways to get involved, visit Purina.com/Together or reach out to your Purina representative.

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