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The Bridge Club Announces Katherine Polak as 2025 ICON Honoree

Dr. Polak to be honored at the 2025 VMX Conference

PALATINE, IL – October 22, 2024 – The Bridge Club, a critical conversation company advancing veterinary medicine, proudly announces Dr. Katherine Polak DVM MPH MS DACVPM DABVP (Shelter Medicine Practice) as the recipient of the 2025 Bridge Club ICON Award. Dr. Polak’s global contributions to animal welfare and shelter medicine, along with her tireless leadership in animal welfare advocacy, set her apart in this year’s category, which focused on individuals making a significant global impact in veterinary medicine.

Dr. Polak has been recognized for her extraordinary achievements in improving the lives of animals worldwide. A veterinary graduate of Iowa State University, she is double boarded in Shelter Medicine and Preventive Medicine. Dr. Polak’s career has been defined by her work across Asia, where she led monumental efforts to manage stray dog populations humanely, end the dog and cat meat trade, and spearhead veterinary training initiatives. As the Director of Animal Welfare for Soi Dog Foundation, she launched one of the largest spay/neuter programs in the region, which has vaccinated and sterilized over half a million dogs in Bangkok to date.

In her current role as the Vice President of Companion Animals and Engagement for Humane Society International, Dr. Polak continues to influence global policy and improve animal welfare across Latin America, Africa, Europe, and Asia. Among her recent achievements, she played a key role in the team that helped secure a landmark ban on the dog meat trade in South Korea. Her leadership in securing humane outcomes for animals in underserved communities worldwide solidifies her as a true global champion in veterinary medicine.

The Bridge Club ICON Award represents the pinnacle recognition bestowed upon an expert who showcases leadership skills and dedication to improving veterinary practices through innovation and excellence, in care delivery methods. Nominees for this award are put forward by professionals, in the field and undergo a thorough evaluation process conducted by past recipients of the ICON Award. The ultimate recipient is chosen by event sponsors Blue Buffalo, IDEXX and the North American Veterinary Community.

“Katherine’s impact on global veterinary medicine is immeasurable,” said Dr. Alex Miller, Manager of Veterinary Services at Blue Buffalo. “Her dedication to improving the lives of animals in underserved regions is inspiring, and she exemplifies the very best of what veterinary professionals can achieve.”

Past Bridge Club ICON Honorees Include:

- Kara Burns, MS, MEd, LVT, CVT, VTS (Nutrition) – 2024
- Dr. Ruby Perry – 2023
- Kristin Peck, CEO of Zoetis – 2022
- Bob Vetere, former CEO of American Pet Products Association – 2021
- Dr. Michael Cavanaugh, former CEO of AAHA – 2020



- Julia Stephanus, founder of Avviare – 2019
- John Payne, Executive Chairman at Chou2 Pharma – 2018
- Dr. Eleanor Green, former Dean of Texas A&M – 2017
- Jon Ayers, former CEO of IDEXX – 2016

Dr. Polak will be formally honored during The Bridge Club ICON event on January 13, 2025, in Orlando, Florida. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear Dr. Polak's inspiring journey and global impact through a moderated conversation.

To learn more about Dr. Polak's accomplishments, view this video: <https://youtu.be/zxSQ7mUDgIk>. To learn more about The Bridge Club and its mission to elevate veterinary medicine, visit www.thebridgeclub.com.

ABOUT THE BRIDGE CLUB CONVERSATIONS, INC.

The Bridge Club is dedicated to bringing vital conversations forward to elevate veterinary medicine. Our conversations give every member of this profession a voice in advancing the profession. To date, The Bridge Club has hosted over 300 conversations dedicated to veterinary medicine. To see what we will be talking about next, visit www.thebridgeclub.com.

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