

50
YEARS
1970-2020

The Association for
**Animal Welfare
Advancement**



A Letter to our Members About Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

November 30, 2020

As we in the United States find ourselves amidst a racial reckoning, I will tell you that my vision for animal welfare has never been clearer: *The animal welfare mission needs to be fueled by opportunity for and access to all.*

Our shared calling must equally represent the well-being of all the people who comprise animal welfare – our employees, peers, volunteers, adopters, donors, partners, sponsors, clients and all citizens of our communities. That means nurturing and protecting DIVERSITY, in all its forms – ethnicity, gender, background, experiences, ideas, dreams, perspectives – to fuel understanding, progress, creativity, innovation, and unity. We must prioritize the *human* in humane in order to effectively address systemic disparities in animal welfare.

It is my commitment, as well as that of our Board of Directors and our staff, to advance toward a truly collective animal welfare with passion and persistence, alongside the many who share this vision. The Association has been working hard to ensure that animal welfare throughout North America is delivered with compassion, respect, equality, and inclusion for all people and pets.

For The Association, the journey started with simply listening to social justice advocates already working in animal welfare. Established in 2019, The Association's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee has taken the lead in efforts to facilitate conversations with the field through roundtable discussions, podcasts, blogs, and webinars. Both the Spring 2020 Conference and the Fall 2020 Conference featured multiple sessions devoted to exploring DEI issues.

The DEI Committee's early diversity efforts laid the groundwork that has helped take the conversation deeper. After spending several months developing a Statement and Definitions document which includes the commitment to *lead intentionally by naming and calling out racism in the structures, systems, and culture of animal welfare*, the DEI Committee next undertook an extensive search process and The Association will be employing an experienced DEI consultant to help us further this mission in 2021. You can also look forward to additional webinars, surveys and resources, including toolkits, coming in the new year. All of these resources have been developed, curated, or designed by the DEI Committee to bring individuals and organizations along on the journey.

No matter where you are on the path, please join us. We cannot advance animal welfare without engaging all communities with purpose and intentionality. Let's mitigate ego and think about what's in the best interest of nurturing the human-animal bond for all people and their animal companions. We need you—and all our members—to participate in this journey to achieve success in creating humane communities.



Jim Tedford, CAWA
President and CEO
The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement