

# Friday Feature

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## Animal Advocate

### Lawyer spearheads nonprofit 'Attorneys for Animals' organization

By SHEILA PURSGLOVE  
Legal News

**D**espite sharing her childhood with a dog, several cats and a chinchilla, Beatrice ("Bee") Friedlander only became passionate about animal issues in the 1980s.

"I think it was the bond I had with Erika, a German shepherd dog who was my only constant companion during a period of time when I was in law school, began practicing law, and moved several times, that helped me understand the importance of animals," says Friedlander, president and a founding member of Attorneys for Animals, a nonprofit Michigan organization dedicated to using the legal system to protect animals and advance animal rights.

When Friedlander, who followed her father into law, was studying law at Ohio State University in the mid-'70s, animal law was not on her radar—or the radar of many other people, for that matter.

"I began law school in the post-Watergate era, when the lawyers and the law were considered to be the most effective way of bringing about social change," she says. "It was also a time when increasing numbers of women were attending law school. I viewed the law as a way to better society."

During her legal career, Friedlander worked in housing law for the City of New York; a legal services organization for prisoners; and practiced general civil law for the UAW Legal Services Plan.

In the early 1990s, attorney Wanda Nash's notice in the Michigan Bar Journal, calling for attorneys interested in animal law, caught her attention—and Friedlander was among about 20 people who responded.

"It was a true light-bulb moment," she says. "For the first time I realized I could combine my profession with my passion, and significantly advance animals' interests and welfare using my legal background."

"Before that—as hard as it is to believe now—being an attorney and helping animals seemed to be two separate things."

Attorneys for Animals was the genesis of the State Bar of Michigan's Animal Law Section (ALS), with Friedlander a founding member of both.

"At the time, early to mid-1990s, a few city or regional animal law organizations were in existence," she says. "Having a statewide section was the opportunity to both promote the field among other attorneys, and gain the respect and recognition that comes from being part of a state bar."

Founded in 1995, the ALS was the first

statewide animal law section, and its activities include legislation, litigation, education, conferences, a newsletter, and outreach via annual awards.

"Animal law practitioners have become more sophisticated in their arguments and in forming alliances—they understand the importance of the federal regulatory system and have become adept at using it to promote animal welfare," Friedlander says. "Not only has the sheer number of animal law classes and student organizations grown, but there is funding for programs as well, such as those at Lewis & Clark and at Harvard Law."

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Animal law is no longer looked down upon or patronized, she adds.

"That isn't to say the field doesn't have enemies, but it's a reflection of its growing importance that opponents fear us rather than condescend to us. Media reporting has become more serious—and, in large part, favorable."

But it was an uphill climb. Friedlander recalls that in 1995, the Associated Press combined two animal-themed stories into one widely distributed article written in a tongue-in-cheek style. One was about PETA protesters following the Oscar Mayer Weinermobile—the other was about a group of Michigan attorneys forming the SBM Animal Law Section.

After her retirement in 2014, Friedlander began devoting more time to Attorneys for Animals.

"The nonprofit and animal advocacy worlds had changed dramatically in 10-15 years, and AFA revised its strategy, mission and programs to take advantage of new technology and an animal-friendly population eager to learn about using the

law to advance their advocacy," she says, adding that AFA is not a law firm, and does not represent individual clients.

The all-volunteer AFA has more than 60 members. A little under half are not attorneys or law students, attracted by the tag line "Connecting Animal Advocates with Animal Law." AFA would like to recruit more attorneys into its informal referral system for animal law cases. In late November it launched an "Animal Friendly Attorney" certification program designed to provide animal conscious consumers with easy access to information about animal friendly attorneys who practice in many areas – even when the legal matters don't involve animals or animal law.

AFA—which has hosted talks on such topics as animal agriculture, animal activism, and pet trusts—had significant input into the passage of PA 94 of 2016, (HB 4478), which allows a Personal Protection Order (PPO) to be issued to prevent harming or taking of an animal in a domestic violence situation.

AFA also was one of three parties that joined in an amicus brief written by MSU Law Professor David Favre, in a pending 6th Circuit case, appealing a decision in which the district court dismissed a \$1983 claim against the Detroit Police for shooting plaintiffs' three dogs, holding that, because the dogs were unlicensed, they were "contraband" and plaintiffs lost property right to the animals.

Major issues of interest to animal advocates include urban wildlife, and human/animal interactions; congressional and federal agency efforts to roll back protections; Michigan's efforts to introduce new game species; risks to wildlife internationally; the "personhood" of animals; the increasing importance of a regulatory system on animal welfare; the impact of economic and consumer issues on animal agriculture; animals in entertainment; and many other topics.

Friedlander believes animal issues must be addressed on the societal/institutional level and sees animal advocacy as a social justice movement.

"However, it's also crucial to maintain a connection to, and make lives better for, individual animals," she says.

With that in mind, she is a hands-on volunteer at Crafty Cat Rescue in Ann Arbor, and a board member at the Bird Center of Washtenaw County, and at Leuk's Landing, a nonprofit facility in Ann Arbor for cats with feline leukemia.

"I find board service rewarding because it offers the opportunity to get to know an organization intimately, to see its strengths, and to have an impact on its growth and direction," she says. "The Bird Center has given me the opportunity to meet bird



Photo courtesy of Bee Friedlander  
Attorney Beatrice "Bee" Friedlander is president and a founding member of Attorneys for Animals, a nonprofit Michigan organization dedicated to using the legal system to protect animals and advance animal rights.

experts and rehabilitators, learn more about birds, and observe the constant efforts to improve bird care.

"Leuk's Landing has given me insight into how the passion of volunteers and their devotion to the cats makes this all-volunteer organization function smoothly; and has allowed me to work with the founder to find ways to serve more FeLV cats without major capital improvements to the shelter."

The Ohio native, who shares her Canton home with her husband, Donald Garlit, and three felines, Julia, Stella and Precious, is a board member of the nonprofit Animals and Society Institute in Ann Arbor, where she previously served as executive director.

"I've learned about the exciting academic field of human-animal studies and explored the range of our interaction with animals, both positive and negative," she

says. "It also gave me the experience of managing a non-profit and learning the varied skills that are required and are different from—and somewhat foreign to—the practice of law."

"I met and still maintain friendships with many brilliant and committed animal advocates who think deeply about these issues, and who are seeking to improve animals' lives, by changing society's institutions."

On account of her ASI experience, Friedlander maintains contact with academics working in human-animal studies, and the Advisory Council for the Center for Humane Studies at Madonna University in Livonia affords this opportunity.

"The council has a fascinating mix of people," she says. "It's interesting to see how a Catholic institution mediates the academic study of our relationship with animals."



Photo courtesy of Bee Friedlander  
Friedlander is pictured at Leuk's Landing, a nonprofit facility in Ann Arbor for cats with feline leukemia, where she serves as a board member.

Attorneys for Animals  
Secretary Kate Brindle is a  
Michigan State university  
College of Law alumna, and  
a co-winner of the State Bar  
of Michigan 2016 Wanda A.  
Nash Award.

Photo courtesy of Kate Brindle



### On board for Attorneys for Animals

In addition to Bee Friedlander as president, Wanda A. Nash Award 2016 co-winner Kate Brindle serves as secretary; Friedlander's husband, Donald Garlit is a founding member of AFA and of the SBM Animal Law Section, serves as treasurer; and Brittany Mouzourakis of Dykema is vice president.

The directors are former AFA president Margo Miller; Detroit Mercy Law alumna Sharon Noll Smith, an original AFA member, and a founding member of the SBM Animal Law Section; Molly Tamule-

vich, a volunteer and consultant for numerous animal welfare agencies in Michigan; Nicole Tennenhouse, a longtime AFA board member and past secretary; and Wayne Law alumna and 2014 Wanda A. Nash Award winner Rebecca Wrock, an attorney at Couzens, Lansky, Fealk, Ellis, Roeder & Lazar, P.C., in Farmington Hills, who will become Vice President in 2018.

Incoming board members are Erin Morgan Klug, Varnum, LLP; and Justin Sterk, Bloom Sluggett, PC.