



Partnerships key to giving back during COVID-19

We take a look at four companies that have embodied the spirit of philanthropy in 2020, even as the global pandemic has changed the needs of the world — and how to fulfill them.

BY LINDSAY BEATON

Those in the pet food industry are no strangers to philanthropy, but 2020 has brought out the importance of partnerships in a whole new way.

C OVID-19 turned everything upside down and gave the pet food industry more incentive than ever to lend help to animal shelters, supporting programs and humanity at large in 2020. Everything from monetary and food donations to volunteerism have been bright spots in the pet food world in 2020, and in this annual feature we take a look at four companies representing the best of what pet food has to offer its communities.

Manna Pro: 4-H fundraiser

Manna Pro, which provides feeds, supplements and treats to companion and agricultural animals, has been an agricultural partner of 4-H (the U.S.'s largest youth development organization) for two years. This year, due to COVID-19, the company held a virtual fundraiser for 4-H that got youth and alumni involved all over the country.



Manna Pro, a company with deep agricultural roots, has found a solid partnership in 4-H, which today highlights youth development in many areas but also has a founding history in agriculture. *Courtesy Manna Pro*

“Manna Pro has deep agricultural roots,” said Teri Nichols, equine brand manager for Manna Pro. “Our company’s love for animals and their humane care is best described by our ‘Nurturing Life’ purpose. We like to work with organizations such as 4-H that are education focused and share our passion for the well-being of animals.”

While most counties didn’t allow 4-H

kids to show animals due to COVID-19, Manna Pro created a virtual mosaic and fundraiser, which took place during April 2020, to encourage participants to submit photos illustrating their “champion” mentality. The state with the highest rate of participation via photo submissions received a scholarship to support their local 4-H. Additionally, Manna Pro encouraged people to donate directly to 4-H, and matched donations at US\$10,000.

Nebraska 4-H won the photo submission portion, receiving US\$6,000. Kentucky 4-H came in second and received US\$3,000 and Arkansas 4-H came in third and received US\$1,000.

Manna Pro plans to continue its partnership with 4-H, focusing on the importance of educating youth on the care of animals as a positive way of life.

Merrick Pet Care: “BBQ 4 Good”

Over the summer, premium pet food company Merrick launched

its new, slow-cooked BBQ wet dog food recipes, and as the company often does with new products it attached a philanthropic element to the effort. While the pandemic changed Merrick’s initial plans, the company pivoted and found success in partnership.

“We had always planned to promote the launch of our slow-cooked BBQ recipes this summer, but like many businesses we shifted our approach due to the pandemic,” said Jillian Smith, director of communications for Merrick. “In talking with our shelter partners at the start of the pandemic, we were disheartened to learn that while interest in pet adoptions has never been higher, many shelters were struggling through financial losses from cancelled fundraising events, lower revenue streams and reduced donations.”

The company kicked off its “BBQ 4 Good” program in late June 2020. The program encouraged dog lovers to order barbecue from partner restaurants in



NFL Baltimore Ravens player Ronnie Stanley, a long-time Merrick partner, is pictured with his two rescue dogs, Lola and Rico. Stanley is a big supporter of Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter (BARCS), which is the local shelter where he adopted both his dogs. *Courtesy Merrick Pet Care*

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Austin, Texas; Baltimore, Maryland; or Chicago, Illinois, and for each order Merrick made a donation to a shelter local to the city (Austin Pets Alive!, Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter — BARCS, PAWS Chicago). Additionally, diners nationwide could order through DoorDash using a BBQ4Good promo code and, in return, Merrick made a donation to North Shore Animal League America (NSALA).

Overall, more than 4,600 orders were placed as a result of the program and Merrick donated more than US\$57,000 to the partner shelters.

Wellness Natural Pet Food: Dogtoberfest

Boston, Massachusetts-based Harpoon Dogtoberfest (Harpoon is a beer brand with breweries in Boston and Windsor, Vermont) was held for its third year in 2020, but of course things had to change because of COVID-19. The whole thing went virtual, and natural pet food company Wellness entered its third year as an event sponsor by presenting the Festminster Dog Show online.

The dog show itself “is a festive costume contest inviting dogs to strike their best pose to win exciting prizes,” said Chanda Leary-Coutu, director of consumer experience for Wellness. “For the first time, this year’s contest took place on social media — pet



In 2019, Wellness participated for the second year in Dogtoberfest, formerly an in-person event but adapted to a digital format in 2020 due to COVID-19 concerns.

Courtesy Wellness Natural Pet Food

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parents were invited to post video and photo entries of their pups in four main contest categories on the Dogtoberfest Facebook page. Wellness and Harpoon selected finalists in each category, and Dogtoberfest 'attendees' voted for winners via Harpoon's Instagram page. We donated Wellness vouchers and Wellness CORE dog treats as prizes for each category winner."

The event, which benefited the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA), the Lucy Mackenzie Humane Society and the Kenary Brain Tumor Research Fund at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, has raised over US\$6,000 so far.

Wilbur-Ellis: 100th anniversary Giving Program

Food and feed nutrition solutions provider Wilbur-Ellis is celebrating its upcoming 100-year anniversary (which occurs on June 29, 2021) by giving back.

"As we celebrate, we also wanted to give back to our communities," said Jeanne Forbis, vice president of communications at Wilbur-Ellis. "This is a tradition

at Wilbur-Ellis and it's especially important right now, with the pandemic creating so much need across the country and the world. So, we developed a 100th anniversary Giving Program."

Each month the company will post a question for adults and another for kids in employees' families about how the company can continue to thrive. The questions are posted on Wilbur-Ellis' 100th Anniversary website, and for each response received the company will make a donation to the Red Cross in the U.S., Canada and Asia-Pacific, the areas where Wilbur-Ellis employees live and work. Everyone is invited to participate, including employees, the kids in their families, customers, business partners, retirees and friends of Wilbur-Ellis.

"At the end of the program in June 2021 we'll announce the total contribution to the Red Cross, which builds on our long-time support for the organization, including a US\$100,000 donation in April 2020 to support the Red Cross' COVID-19 response," said Forbis. ■

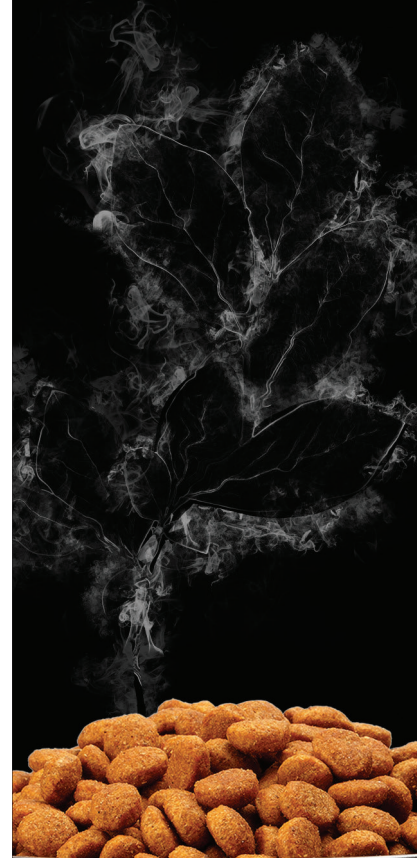


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