

## Women Entrepreneurs Sharpen Their Skill Sets

This year's Women in the Pet Industry Network Conference & Awards, held Aug. 13-15 at the Portland, Ore., Crowne Plaza Downtown, saw two days of speakers, business workshops, networking opportunities, the Pet Industry Woman of the Year Awards event and more.

Portland area-based Women in the Pet Industry Network (WIPIN), founded in 2010, strives to recognize the highly accomplished women who are playing an increasingly major role in the pet space, said Shawna Schuh, president, adding that she hopes that the organization will grow its membership and reach a much wider audience.

"We are the only cross-category network in the pet industry," said Schuh. "We seek to help our members grow, give and connect for mutual benefit. We can learn more, grow more and give more when we share ideas with like-minded individuals, even if their pet business is unlike ours."

WIPIN offers executive business coaching as well as support in leadership and communication, collaboration, fundraising, corporate partnering, marketing, advertising and more for its 500-plus members, who include product manufacturers, entrepreneurs, independent pet retailers, pet service providers, veterinarians, trainers, media personalities, animal welfare group leaders and more.

"People are excited about having uncovered the network, and it has far exceeded their expectations," Schuh said. "There are many women's groups and many conferences, but our network and conference are special.

More and more women are understanding how much stronger we are as a group."

The caliber of speakers at this year's Women in the Pet Industry Network Conference & Awards was on par with any executive conference out there, Schuh said.

"Three tracks of content—business strategies, marketing ideas and creative collaboration—kept the conference one of the richest events in the pet industry this year for pet professionals. [These] skills that impact the bottom line," she added.

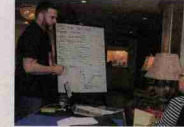
During the event, more than 20 speakers and breakout groups tackled topics such as social media, marketing, sales and corporate/brand partnerships. Kathleen Gage, an award-winning professional speaker specializing in sales, marketing and promotions, delivered the keynote, "Your Message, Your Mission, Your Movement."

Certified master trainer and certified pet dog trainer Amber Burckhalter, CEO, director of training and founder of K-9 Coach in Atlanta and chairman, board of trustees for the Association of Pet Dog Trainers, shared an exclusive look into her week with one of the world's greatest business visionaries with "Necker Island: What a Week With Sir Richard Branson Taught Me About Entrepreneurship."

For more information about WIPIN, visit [womeninthepetindustry.com](http://womeninthepetindustry.com).



From left: Alissa Gander, Amanda Hessel, Yvonne DiVita, Kristen Levine and Carol Bryant



Mike Linville, CEO of Black Dog Marketing, offered attendees 30-minute appointments to hone their marketing strategies.



Shawna Schuh, Women in the Pet Industry Network president



Amber Burckhalter, CEO, director of training and founder of K-9 Coach, spoke about what she learned during an entrepreneurs' week on Necker Island with Sir Richard Branson.



Beke Lubeach, marketing and media strategist, and principal at Dog Bone Marketing Solutions, presented on how brand partnerships can help jump-start businesses.

**BlogPaws  
 CEO, Co-  
 founder Wins  
 Pet Industry  
 Woman of  
 the Year**

This year's Pet Industry Woman of the Year honor went to Yvonne DiVita, CEO and co-founder of BlogPaws (blog



paws.com), the global social media community focused on “teaching pet enthusiasts, pet bloggers and all pet parents how to use social media effectively and responsibly” that has 3,000 registered members and in 2012 became a member of the Pet360 family of sites.

Women in the Pet Industry Network's (WIPIN) Pet Industry Woman of the Year award categories include Solopreneur, Entrepreneur, Corporate, Advocate and Rising Star. Five finalists are named in each category; one Pet Industry Woman of the Year is chosen from the 25 finalists.

DiVita won the Rising Star category; award recipients from the remaining four categories included:

- **Advocate:** Carol Bryant, founder of Fidose of Reality and Wigglebutt Warriors
- **Corporate:** Kristen Levine, founder of Kristen Levine Pet Living
- **Entrepreneur:** Amanda Hessel, vice president of marketing and sales for Smart Animal Training Systems
- **Solopreneur:** Alissa Gander, owner of Peace.Love.Paws.

Business leaders outside the pet industry make up the panel of independent judges who review and score the nominations.

“The Pet Industry Women of the Year Awards recognize the women who dedicate their time and talents to improving the lives of all pets and their parents,” said Shawna Schuh, president of WIPIN. “[They] are a celebration of women who have devoted their lives to the pet industry, and [are] helping women and pets with passion.”



Yvonne DiVita, CEO and co-founder of BlogPaws.com, winner of this year's Pet Industry Woman of the Year Award