

APDT 2023 Nominations Questionnaire

To be returned to david.feldner@apdt.com by June 16, 2023

1. Describe why you want to be a candidate for the APDT Board of Directors and strengths and assets you can provide the Board and organization.

The APDT was the first professional organization I joined as a dog trainer. As I've progressed in my career and launched my own business, I've come to value the resources and standards of the organization more and more. (And I've always loved the conference!)

I have fifteen years of experience as a professional dog trainer and have earned multiple certifications (CDBC, CPDT-KSA, CSAT) because I want to show my experience and my drive to continue my education. Before I decided to work with dogs, I earned a Master of Arts degree in Journalism from the University of Texas, and I bring that along with me as a communication tool as well. But I think the biggest way that I can help is my passion for shaping an industry that will help dogs and their people with LIMA-based methods, and for all professionals working with dogs to get the best education possible to help them help animals.

2. The ADPT core purpose is to advance excellence in the profession of dog training and behavior consulting. Please write in your own words what this statement means to you.

I love working with the "problem" dogs – the ones who have trickier cases that not everyone feels comfortable taking are my favorites. But I didn't start taking those cases until I'd educated myself thoroughly and felt like I had enough experience and knowledge to help instead of creating further harm. Working with these dogs has given me a window into when previous training can create stress and sometimes true physical and emotional harm to both dogs and their humans, because many of the dogs I work with have worked with trainers before me who did more harm than good. There are so many humans and dogs who can use the help of a good trainer, and so few standards to help people know how to find those trainers. APDT offers both the education to improve trainers and the platform to help the average dog guardian find someone who can truly help them, and that's vital.

Experience, Professionalism, Governance & Leadership (Understand the basics of board governance, strategic planning, and finance, understand the importance of confidentiality)

3. If you have experience with previous governing Boards, please provide the following information:

I have not served on a Board previously, although I have worked as an employee of a nonprofit service dog organization who operated under a Board.

- a. Approximate annual budget of organizations
- b. Number of members if a 501(c)6 in organization
- c. Number of members on Board

- d. Number of paid professional staff
- e. Dates served
- f. Weekly time commitment for Board service and a short summary of your duties and responsibilities as a Board member (including any leadership roles).

4. In general, what do you see as the role of the Board, staff and volunteers?

In my view, the role of Board, staff and volunteers is to further the mission of the organization, help make decisions that will help improve the organization and move it forward, and to uphold the standards of APDT.

5. Please describe a situation where as a Board member or business professional, you had to communicate with a stakeholder who was unhappy with a decision made either by the organization or the business. How did you resolve the matter?

Since my business involves directly working with people in order to help them and their dogs, I often encounter people who have high expectations of how quickly or perfectly their dog can learn something and that can lead to frustration or disappointment if things don't go how they'd like with their dog. In general, I try to resolve this by being empathetic to their situation, discussing and setting realistic expectations of their dog and breaking down the issue for them so they can see step by step what their dog can accomplish and how it can happen.

6. Please describe a situation where you had to keep information confidential at work or in your personal life.

I have frequently needed to keep information about clients confidential, especially when working with service dogs – many of the clients I worked with in that setting have medical needs and other disabilities that they have disclosed to me as part of making sure the dog is trained to help them in the needed ways, and I value the vulnerability of giving me that information and would never betray it by sharing it without their permission.

7. How do you view your strengths in a group setting? i.e., idea generation, analysis, mediation, facilitation, etc. How do you utilize those strengths best?

I have no hesitation in sharing my opinion, but I also think it is valuable to listen and take in what others are saying in a group setting. Even if we disagree, understanding why and where we agree and how we can come to a decision that is helpful to the whole is very important to me. One of my strengths as a dog trainer has been discussing training methods with clients who have used methods I wouldn't recommend in the past and approaching them in a way that is nonjudgmental and understanding, but still gives them the full picture of why I recommend what I do and how they can benefit from it.

8. How do you view your weaknesses in a group setting? i.e., finance, strategy, organization, etc. What opportunities for growth do you see in a group setting?

Until starting my own business, I had very little experience in managing finances, and I still think I have a lot to learn in that area. As someone with ADHD, I also always feel like I can benefit from the knowledge of others on organizing the many ideas and opinions I have

into reality. Really, I'm a big believer that there is always something more to learn and improve on so I'm always open to that in a group setting.

9. Please review the list below and indicate the areas where you believe you have strong skills and experience. Provide a descriptive example of how you have successfully used your skills for any or all of the following.

- a. Financial Statements
- b. Education

I love being both a student and a teacher. I think education is vital to growth and spend as much time as I can reading and attending seminars and conferences. I also love sharing my skills with others and have multiple times taken on mentee trainers who are interested in behavior consulting to help them grow their own skills.

- c. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are vital to a strong organization and society. While I have many areas of privilege, I also come from a perspective of being neurodivergent and a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. I do my best always to listen to diverse opinions and not speak for marginalized groups but to support and include them.

- d. Governance
- e. Law
- f. Marketing and Public Relations

I grew up in the journalism world – my mom was a small-town newspaper editor and I spent my time after school in her newsroom watching her put together the paper. In college, I held multiple editorial positions on our school paper including editor, and went on to study journalism in graduate school at the University of Texas. All of this has helped me in my own business marketing and I've helped with public relations at a few smaller non-profits. Creating clear and effective marketing strategies is an area where I feel comfortable and confident.

- g. Strategic Planning

APDT Participation, Leadership, and Mission (*Committed to and fully understand our mission, strategic plan and value within the marketplace*)

10. Please tell us what your participation has been with ADPT webinars, the CLASS program and the ADPT community.

I have been attending the APDT conference for years and have participated in the online community. I've also utilized some of the great webinars in the past.

11. Please list any committees, task forces or volunteer work within the APDT and outside of APDT you are involved with or have been involved in within the last 3 years.

For the last few years, I have been a volunteer member of the Marketing committee and have served as the chair of the committee last year and this year. I have also been a volunteer member of the Ethics committee.

12. Education is a major focus of the APDT. Describe what role education has played in your role as a dog training professional and how you have encouraged employees, co-workers, and colleagues to continue their education.

Education is everything to me. I started my training career at PetSmart and while I grew there as a trainer, the education they were able to provide was limited at the time, so I started reading books and attending local seminars as much as I could afford. I've been inspired by so many other trainers and I want to help pass that on whenever possible. When I've worked in groups, I would always share information from the conferences I attended for those who weren't able to be there. I've also encouraged several friends and coworkers to join the APDT, earn certifications and attend seminars and conferences. I've taught at a workshop on training service dogs multiple times and taken on newer trainers to shadow me on multiple occasions – I think sharing our knowledge and being open to always learning more is vital.

Personal and Professional (*understanding of basic finance, business and growth strategy, personal accountability, ability to work with others in a team setting, practice active listening, respond with the organization's best interest*)

13. How would another team member describe your contribution and style of communication?

I often take a leadership role if I feel like I have the experience and knowledge to do so, but I also believe in listening to the whole group and not just taking over. I'm direct and honest but my goal is always to do that in a way that is supportive and helps move things forward instead of making anyone feel unheard or defensive.

14. Explain a time you used your influence strategically to persuade a group? How did you do it? What was the outcome?

The first example that comes to mind for me is teaching a less traditional training behavior in a basic manners class. When I started my own business I decided to run some group classes with my own curriculum, and while I included all of the standard cues like sit, down and stay, I also wanted to throw in a couple of cues that I thought were great and fairly simple but not commonly taught. One of the behaviors I incorporated was a chin rest, where the dog rests their chin on your open hand. I had used this a lot in training retrieve behaviors with service dogs and had seen some other benefits to it, like the dog becoming more still and focused. I could tell that some of the students in the first class I used it in were skeptical of the usefulness of the cue, so after describing the behavior I demonstrated it with one of the more energetic dogs in class. After a few repetitions the dog was getting more focused and moving less because the cue involved having a closed mouth and a still body. After that, I had everyone practice on their own while I walked around and helped, and I found that everyone was much more enthusiastic about the cue and amazed that their dogs were able to do it.

15. What does Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion mean to you?

Having a variety of experiences and perspectives in an organization is invaluable. But not everyone has the same options to reach those goals, so offering opportunities that allow a wider range of people to participate and learn is an important part of creating a group that is representative of everyone and not just those with the most opportunity and

privilege. To me, DEI means making the path to be part of APDT available to everyone regardless of race, gender, orientation, etc. Letting everyone have the opportunity to learn and be involved makes us stronger.

16. Why do you feel Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is important in the animal training and behavior industry?

I could give a lot of reasons, but one of the most important reasons I think Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is important in the animal training and behavior industry is that our clients are also diverse, and seeing themselves and their community represented can encourage more participation and education all around. I also want to make sure that everyone who is interested in dog behavior feels welcome and has access to the education and resources that can help create a community of excellent dog training professionals.