
Board of Directors

Heaven on Earth Society for Animals

Board of Directors

Ritchie L. Geisel, President and CEO

Ritchie has spent his entire career in nonprofit and says he was the only member of his Stanford Business School class who had his eye (and heart) on the independent sector. He has served in executive and fundraising capacities in the education, human services and animal welfare fields and presently heads a Los Angeles-based organization dedicated to improving the lives of at-risk children and their families through comprehensive services and a holistic approach. Ritchie joined the Heaven on Earth board in 2003 and has been president since 2004. He and his wife, Pamela, reside in Burbank and are parents to five rescue cats: Bravo, Nosey, Abby and Heaven on Earth alums Nairobi and Fighter.

Erendira Kriteaman, Vice President and Director of Sanctuary Operations

Eri started rescuing homeless animals at age 19, soon discovering she had stumbled into what was as much calling as cause. After several years' experience volunteering with a number of Los Angeles area rescue groups, she founded Heaven on Earth Society for Animals in February 2000. Eri has always felt particularly drawn to helping animals who are less likely to be adopted, and this continues to be Heaven on Earth's focus. She currently resides in West Los Angeles with husband Josh, young sons Elijah and Isaac, daughters Ali and Sarah and cat Pretty Girl—whose refusal to allow any other cats in her home is the original reason for Heaven on Earth's sanctuary.

C. Montenegro, Vice President and Director of Adoptions

Carlos says his previous job as manager for a customer service firm showed him the joy of working with animals. Ahem. Raised a dog person, he discovered upon relocating from Florida several years ago that he simply hadn't met the right cat(s). Carlos now has the job of his dreams and lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Destiny (Heaven on Earth's adoptions coordinator), and their rescue family: basset hound Sugar, guinea pigs Bujin and Syd, mouse Basil Ratbone, fish Chuck (and friends) and cats Osiris, Isis, Solo, Mia, Capella and Heaven on Earth alum Superman. Carlos joined the Heaven on Earth board in 2006.

Jennifer Parsignault, Vice President and Director of SpayShip Transport

By day collections supervisor for a union trust fund, Jennifer is also an artist and singer/songwriter with a couple of independent albums to her credit. She grew up with cats and horses, but found her way to animal rescue through a colony of feral cats in her neighborhood. Jennifer, who is still recognized with gratitude by neighborhood ferals, has served on the Heaven on Earth board since 2006 and lives in the San Fernando Valley with her husband, Bob Wynne, rescue cats Beenes and Bailey and an ever-changing census of fosters.

Lisa Hague, Treasurer and CFO

Previously a rocket scientist and strategic planner in the aerospace industry, Lisa is now associate director of an

economic and market analysis center for a nonprofit that serves as unbiased advisor to the government in acquiring space assets. She lives in Long Beach with furry roommates Mickie, a colony kitten rescue from 2001, and Kramer, who was adopted from Petco during a shopping trip to buy food for Mickie. Lisa served on the Heaven on Earth board in 2003-2004 and rejoined the team in 2008.

Diann Peterson, Secretary

Diann was raised with (not by) dogs, with her first feline love arriving in the form of a green-eyed, aristocratic stray she named Vic (short for Eviction), in dubious tribute to the no-pets building where she then lived. A nonprofit fundraiser by trade, Diann now resides in pet-friendly San Fernando Valley digs with her first girl cat, Phoebe, and Thom, the polydactyl troublemaker she adopted from Heaven on Earth. "I'm involved with many nonprofit groups," she says, "but none as effective and dedicated as this one." Diann joined the Heaven on Earth board in 2009.

Melissa Godlash, Director

Melissa's interest in animals began while growing up on a farm in rural Texas and followed her to the East Coast, where she interned at various animal rescue organizations while a student at Boston University. Now a legal secretary in the financial services industry, she has happily found her after-hours niche as volunteer coordinator for Heaven on Earth, whose board she joined in 2010. Melissa is also currently serving as co-chair for Heaven on Earth's 10th anniversary benefit, set for November 14, 2010. She and her husband, Fred, live in the San Fernando Valley with their spoiled rescue kitty, Felix.

Nicole Jacobson-Zuniga, Director

Nicole is a human resources manager with a volunteer resume that includes human organizations in Los Angeles, where she lived for several years, and her native Pennsylvania. She, along with her husband, Carlos Zuniga, returned to Philadelphia in 2009, where they now live with their four former shelter cats: Pennsylvanians Belle and Hope and Heaven on Earth alums April and Samson. Nicole joined the Heaven on Earth board in 2006; Carlos, an IT professional, designed Heaven on Earth's website and serves as webmaster.

Erica Netzley, Director

It was clear from the start that Erica had a passion for animals, judging from her childhood aspiration to become a professional trainer for domestic house cats. Illustrating how dreams change yet still come full circle, her experience designing and leading internal and external communications programs for entertainment, e-commerce and nonprofit organizations is now being put to good use for Heaven on Earth. Erica, who joined the board in 2009, lives in the San Fernando Valley with her husband and two not-so-well-trained rescue cats, Nobu and Lucy.

Lisa Wohl, Director

Told at 12 she'd have to get a job in high school, Lisa said she'd work in a record store and was true to her word, eventually spending more than 20 years in the music business, most recently in film and television. She now applies the same passion that drove her music industry career to the world of animal welfare and is devoting her creative side to co-chairing Heaven on Earth's 10th anniversary benefit, set for November 14, 2010. Lisa and her husband, Lenny, share their Sherman Oaks home with two jazz cats, Django and Satchmo, and a booze hound named Bailey. She joined the Heaven on Earth board in 2010.

Pamela Geisel, Executive Director (ex officio)

Before assuming the executive director role in 2009, Pam served on the Heaven on Earth board for six years, primarily in development capacities. She was previously a freelance writer and editor for human services organizations. Her interest in animal rescue was awakened in 2001, when she and her husband adopted a disabled cat (survivor of abuse) and found their lives forever changed.