Board of Directors

Chuck Dahle
Retired Corporate Executive
Chairman
Elected 01/01/11; Re-elected 01/01/14

Dee Ruppert
Retired Owner/Operator of Beauty Salon
Off-Site Veterinary Care Coordinator
Elected 03/01/09; Re-elected 03/01/12; Re-elected 03/01/15

Richard Strader
Retired Postmaster/Business Owner
Board Treasurer, IT/Web Maintenance
Elected 10/01/07; Re-elected 10/01/10; Re-elected 10/01/13

Dr. Chris Thornton
Retired Space Systems Engineer
Board Secretary, Manager Special Projects
Elected 12/01/11; Re-elected 12/01/14

Helen Freeman
Master in Education of the Deaf
Manager of Intake and Meds Team
Elected 10/01/07; Re-elected 10/01/10; Re-elected 10/01/13

Ron McClelland
US Air Force, Major (Retired) - Air Force Officer/Retired Systems Engineer
Elected 03/10/15

Executive Staff

Theresa Strader
RN/Pediatric Oncology
NMDR Founder/Executive Director

NMDR – Board of Directors April 14, 2015
Chuck Dahle

After studies at St. Olaf College and the University of Minnesota and 15 years as a recording engineer and performer, I moved into the semiconductor manufacturing management arena in 1977. During the next 30 plus years, I was blessed with opportunities to manage new product development, product management, quality assurance, strategic accounts, regional sales, and OEM market development departments. As the markets and our operations expanded overseas I moved into corporate positions as Director of Marketing, R&D, Global Quality, and Environmental Services.

Three passions survived through it all – music, the outdoors, and dogs. After volunteer stints at Best Friends for three years, one of their founders recommended National Mill Dog Rescue to us to meet our local volunteering desires. We met Theresa and the team, and felt welcome and more fulfilled than ever helping these suffering wonderful companion animals get a new life. Travel switched from overseas flights to marathon truck rides to exotic mid America rest areas, truck stops, and encountering a primitive despicable American business culture based on greed, waste, cruelty, neglect and suffering. The compensation is immeasurable. Our K-9 customers are the most forgiving, grateful, strong and resilient role models I have ever encountered.

My first immediate hope is that I can continue frequently reaching into cramped filthy cages to invite puppy mill breeder dogs into a new life – until those cages no longer exist. Second is to help NMDR continue to grow and improve efficiently and effectively, in direct line with our mission - utilizing only proven effective methods and business practices while never diluting or inhibiting our sacred focus on the dogs.

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Dee Ruppert

After retiring from thirty-eight years in the cosmetology industry in 2006, I made it a priority to find an organization that could fulfill my life-long dream of helping animals. I knew National Mill Dog Rescue was my calling after learning about the puppy mill industry. I’ve had pets all my life, and worked as a wildlife rehabilitator for two years. I currently own 6 dogs, a dwarf miniature horse, and a goat. I’m a previous business owner/manager, served as decorating team leader for a three million dollar building, worked as a hair/makeup artist for a photographer, and a large show chorus. I’ve been married forty two years. We have two adult sons, and two grandchildren. I am currently a Volunteer Coordinator for the organization. I have the highest respect for anyone involved with protecting the lives of animals.

“Suffering at the hands of evil, was never God’s intent when he created life. We still have many lessons to learn.”

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Richard Strader

Rich Strader, Treasurer, Web Design/Maintenance – Rich graduated from Missouri State University in 1969 with a BA in Music Performance. He then served in the United States Air Force for four years during which time he played Tuba for the Lowry Air Force Base Band. After discharge, for nearly 20 years, Rich was Owner/Operator of Player Pianoworks, a business built solely on the restoration and repair of player pianos. In 2009, Rich retired from the United States Postal Service where he had served as Postmaster of Black Forest, CO for nearly 10 years.

Throughout all of his life, Rich had a huge heart for animals and had provided a loving home for many rescued animals over the years, both dogs and cats. After adopting Lily, his first dog rescued from a puppy mill, Rich made a commitment to educate as many people as possible about the plight of puppy mill dogs and to offer all his volunteer efforts to NMDR, in memory of Lily.

Rich resides on a small farm in Black Forest, Colorado with his wife, two daughters, 11 rescued dogs, 2 cats, and a variety of chickens. His hobbies include building high-powered computers, photography and caring for his many special needs rescued dogs. Rich is never seen without the company of one of his dogs in his arms.

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Dr. Chris Thornton

Dr. Chris Thornton received his Doctorate in Management from Colorado Technical University in 2005. Chris retired from Civil Service at the end of 2010, completing 28 years of Government service and 15 years in the electronic manufacturing industry.

Chris was introduced to National Mill Dog Rescue in 2009 through his wife, Ann, who is an active volunteer. Chris chaired the grant writing committee in 2011 and was part of the team that successfully acquired the NMDR Sprinter Van that was donated by the PETCO Corporation. Chris now serves as the Board Secretary, responsible for recording and distributing board minutes, policies, and other key documents. With extensive budgeting experience in the public sector, Chris is also instrumental in budget development at NMDR, and in overseeing the strategic plan monitoring and evaluation process. Chris helps clean the kennels each Thursday morning.

Chris also serves on the Colorado Springs Airport Advisory Commission as a Commissioner.

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NMDR – Board of Directors April 14, 2015
Helen Freeman

My name is Helen Freeman and I am a retired teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing by training and by love. I have taught students in GA and CO since 1976 (everyone can do the math – always a teacher). I have been lucky enough to teach all around the state of CO and even by using the internet to work with students in rural CO.

I have always been a volunteer at heart beginning when I was in high school working with children with physical disabilities.

I joined El Paso County Search and Rescue in my younger days and was a member for 17 years. I served in many capacities: new member coordinator, newsletter producer, and my favorite was being on the search dog team where my dog and I were trained and certified. Most of the years I was on the team, I served on the Board of Directors. I retired when I began traveling around the state with my job.

July 1st of 2007, I had just lost 3 of my precious canine family members from old age and cancer, when I met Theresa Strader on her first rescue following her discovery of Lily and the Puppy Mill industry. I became totally hooked that day and began working with Rich and Theresa to establish NMDR and was an original Board Member. I’m quite proud of how far we’ve come but it is totally due to NMDR’s amazing group of volunteers.

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Ron McClelland

After receiving my Electrical Engineering degree from Kansas State University, I was in the U.S. Air Force from 1971 to 1991. I spent three years enlisted, as an airborne communications repairman. I received my commission and continued my career in communication and computer electronics, attaining the rank of Major. I also received a Master of Business Administration from Oklahoma City University in 1977. During the course of my career we came to Colorado Springs in December, 1984. We loved the area and vowed to retire here! In addition to the technical aspects of my duties, I had opportunity for management and leadership positions, from Detachment Commander of a remote overseas radio relay facility in Italy, to managing over $250 million in North Atlantic Treaty Organization projects across central Europe.

After my retirement from the Air Force in 1991, we did return to Colorado Springs. I spent the next 15 years doing much the same as I did in the Air Force, working for Lockheed Martin as a Systems Engineer. I held technical and managerial positions, maintaining and modernizing command and control systems for Cheyenne Mountain and Air Force Space Command.

I retired from Lockheed Martin in 2008 and dedicated my energy toward volunteering. I volunteer at the Peterson Air and Space Museum, as a docent and as the Museum webmaster. Since September, 2008, when we attended a presentation by Theresa and Helen we fell in love with the mission of NMDR. From then on, both Nona and I have volunteered with NMDR.

Ron McClelland
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EXECUTIVE STAFF

Theresa Strader

Founder/Executive Director

Professionally, for the past 24 years, Theresa has worked as a Pediatric Nurse, specializing in the field of Pediatric Oncology. Throughout those years as well, Theresa devoted the majority of her spare time to rescuing animals. She has volunteered in shelters across the country in a variety of positions: Adoption Counselor, Temperament Evaluator, Foster Care Coordinator and foster home.

After attending a large-scale dog auction on February 17, 2007 in the heart of puppy mill country, Theresa was inspired to make a lasting difference for the dogs held captive by the commercial dog breeding industry. National Mill Dog Rescue (NMDR) was formed to honor one very special dog who was rescued on that day.

As Founder/Director of Operations of NMDR, Theresa upholds several responsibilities: Rescue Coordinator, Organizational Liaison, Public Speaker, Medical Team Member and her personal favorite, foster mom.

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NMDR – Board of Directors April 14, 2015