

Susan P.Cohen, DSW
SWAHAB Chair

My name is Dr. Susan P. Cohen. I am on a mission to help animal lovers and pet professionals join forces to help pets live the best possible lives and pet professionals join forces to help pets live the best possible life.

I'm committed to working with pet owners so the pets in their care live healthy lives and come to a peaceful end; to supporting professionals in their work so that they might continue to work and thrive in their practices, providing excellent service to people and animals, while having a fulfilling life of practice with other people who love what they do.

I was privileged to take an opportunity, early in my career, to develop social work services at The Animal Medical Center (AMC) in New York City. This gave me a chance to do pioneering work in the fields of pet loss and human-animal interaction.

I developed and held the position of Director of Counseling at AMC from 1982-2011 and counseled well over 25,000 people. While there, I developed the first professionally led Pet Loss Support Group and began an animal assisted activity program that took the form of having volunteers work with their own pets (unusual at the time).

Over time I began to be called upon to consult with veterinary practices on client relations and compassion fatigue and with corporations such as Pfizer Animal Health, (now called Zoetis), and Purina on how to help pet lovers provide the best care for animals.

I earned my doctorate in social welfare at Columbia University School of Social Work, researching the role of pets in urban families. Later, I taught social work at Columbia University and Long Island University .

More recently, I've been teaching online graduate courses and seminars for veterinarians and animal protection professionals, as well as writing articles, giving lectures, media interviews and presenting at professional conferences.

One of my chief interests over the past seven or eight years has been an organization named SWAHAB (Social Workers Advancing the Human-Animal Bond), which I currently Chair. SWAHAB was the first group of its kind to be listed as an interest group within the New York Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.