Thank you for your support over this time of transition. All of your comments and feedback have been critical in our decision making.

As part of moving forward with our rejuvenation we have a new Executive Director (me - Sara Andrews), several new and returning Board members, and new Committee leaders to help us address our focus areas. We have optimism and high hopes for all of what the Alliance can continue to achieve for animals.

I'd also like to introduce myself. I'm a Wisconsin native who has been interested in animal issues for most of my life. I have worked on issues related to animal research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, trapping in state parks, animal fighting, and promoting veganism, among others. I have been an Alliance volunteer for over seven years and have been the Executive Director since April of this year.

I first became interested in plant-based eating after learning how much more resource efficient and environmentally friendly a diet based on plants is than one focused on animal-sourced foods. This led to more information seeking which grew into a realization of how our individual choices affect non-human animals and people alike and caused a shift in my behavior and thinking.

I believe that the Alliance's work will help others make the same connections!
Sonya Sidky

Sonya has resided in Wisconsin for most of her life and has been Vegan since Madison Vegan Fest in June 2012. She is deeply committed to advocating for all animal welfare issue in Wisconsin.

Sonya believes that one of the many great strengths of the Wisconsin Alliance for the Animals and the Environment is its reputation for addressing a variety of animal issues, including factory farming, animal experimentation, hunting, and zoos. Sonya believes that this approach attracts a broad membership and volunteer base that allows for a rich cross-exposure of issues.

Sonya is particularly interested in promoting veganism and reducing the suffering of animals resulting from factory farming. Sonya has enthusiastically attended numerous impressive Alliance events such as Vegan Fest, and the Chili cook-off for several years and naturally progressed into and tabling for the Alliance at events such as the Wellness Expo.

Sonya has been employed by the State of Wisconsin for over 15 years and held various positions providing experience analyzing large data sets, survey design and implementation, project management, analytical writing, evaluating grant applications, event planning, procuring services and much more. She hopes to use her analytical background to further the mission of the Alliance and address the root cause of society’s mistreatment of animals.

Johnna Williams

Johnna has been a vegan for over 20 years. Advocating for a happy, healthy life for all beings is core to her belief system and has been the focus of her professional and personal life.

She has worked for and with non-profits for many years in the areas of collaboration, program management and...
Lesley Crocker

Lesley was born and raised in Chicago, coming to Madison in 1974 to attend the UW. She graduated with a Bachelor's in Social Work, and currently works for the State, reviewing medical reports and applying regulations to determine benefit eligibility. She lives in Madison with her husband, stepson, cat, and dog. She became involved with the Alliance in 1991, and has served multiple terms on the Board of Directors in the past.

Lesley worked on such major campaigns as the Vilas Zoo/Primate Research Monkeys [1997-1998] and the Vilas Zoo Elephants [1999-2000]. For over 10 years she served on the Alliance Farm Animal Committee, coordinating their two annual dinners [in honor of The Great American Meatout and World Farmed Animals Day].

Lesley has participated in many events over the years pertaining to Wildlife, Anti-Vivisection, Animals in Entertainment, and Farmed Animals. For fun she enjoys going to movies, spending time with family/friends, visiting Chicago and other cities, reading, creating doll displays, sewing, and card-making.

Marina Drake

A lifelong animal advocate, Marina holds an MA in English Literature from the University of Washington, and has lived in Madison since 1991. Marina has been vegan since 2005. Since 2006, she has been an active member of the Alliance, serving on the Companion Animal and Farmed Animal Committees, as well as on the Board of Directors from 2008 - 2012. From 2013 – 2015, Marina was Editor and Writer of the Alliance’s “Simply Vegan” E-Newsletter.

She has worked on various campaigns, events and activities, including organizing speaker visits and a vegan nutrition workshop, attending demos, investigating the circus, tabling, and recording radio commentaries. Marina hopes to do her part in continuing the Alliance’s work of raising awareness and creating positive change in the lives of all animals.

When she’s not doing animal rights work with friends, Marina likes to read, write, cook vegan food, do yoga, explore the five Rs (reduce, re-use, restore, recover and recycle), and hang out with her husband, their cat Oliver, chickens Carly, Frieda and Annie, and rabbits Charm and Peridot, while they all figure out how to turn their home and yard into a big solar-powered vegan permaculture garden of peace.

Aaron Yarmel - Animals in Research

Aaron went vegan in 2011 and hasn’t looked back. As a PhD student in philosophy at UW-Madison, he is committed to using whatever tools philosophy has to offer to advocate on behalf of animals. Aaron holds a Master of Science degree from the London School of Economics and a Bachelor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music. He has played key roles in organizing and performing (as a violinist) in benefit concerts for animal rights groups in Illinois, New York, Kentucky, and Wisconsin. Aaron is an aspiring effective altruist, and he is the Chief Executive Officer of Effective Altruism, UW. He is thrilled to have the opportunity to revitalize and offer his leadership to the Animals in Research Committee of the Alliance for Animals and the Environment.

Melissa Smith - Wildlife

President and Executive Director of Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf, Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison & New Mexico State University, Delegate to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress.

Melissa has a special interest in the role that sociology plays in wildlife management and Diversity of values. Melissa is dedicated to wildlife agency reform, the public trust, and transparency, representation and democracy within these agencies. She believes firmly in what is called “compassionate conservation” and believes we need change the way wolves and other wildlife are managed in North America. She also enjoys spending time with her rescued sheep, dogs, and cats.
The sixth annual Mad City Vegan Fest is coming up soon... Saturday, June 18 from 10 am to 5 pm at the Alliant Energy Center Exhibition Hall. Vegan Fest is the Alliance’s largest event of the year, and admission and parking are completely free.

Mad City Vegan Fest is a great opportunity to learn more about protecting animals, the environment, and your health. It’s an event where everyone is welcome – from omnivores who are just curious, to longtime vegans and vegetarians.

Join an expected crowd of over 5,000 attendees for delicious food (free samples and larger portions for purchase), inspiring speakers, cooking demonstrations, a great variety of exhibitors (some with products for purchase), and a prize wheel – everyone gets a free ticket for the prize wheel just for showing up! (Check out veganfest.org for a complete list of presenters, exhibitors, food court vendors, and prizes.)

Help us advertise! Download a poster at veganfest.org/poster. Then print it out and put it up at your favorite spots. Thanks!