



Dr. Marie Louderback

- Mobile Veterinarian. Innovator. Community Partner

- Nominated by Kristi Jolly, Registered Nurse

It's a cool, gray day, and Dr. Marie Louderback is making her rounds, checking in on the health of pets in the Twin Cities, but not in the way you might expect. Unlike most veterinarians, Marie doesn't work in an office. Instead, she drives around the metro area, making veterinary house calls to pet-owners who either can't afford to take their pet to a vet clinic, or don't have the transportation to get there.

On this particular afternoon, Marie pulls up to a plain brick suburban apartment building and carries her satchel up to a Guild Incorporated client's small, sparsely decorated apartment. The brown tabby cat who lives here is suffering from kidney failure. Thin and frail, she is dehydrated and has lost her appetite. A lot of clients in this situation might have had to put their pet down because they couldn't afford the treatment. But Marie provided the service to the Guild client at a much lower cost and showed her how to administer antibiotics, an appetite stimulant and fluids to the cat.

At the end of the appointment, the Guild client thanks her, visibly grateful. Because Marie is an animal-lover herself, she understands why. "Pets give us companionship. They make us laugh," she explains. "They also never judge you." Marie is aware that this kind of connection is especially important for people who are socially isolated due to mental illness. "It's just one cat," she says, "but she is very important to this lady."

Marie provides veterinary services at cost through her business 3 Pound Cats. Because she has little overhead, her prices are much lower than those at veterinary offices. When she was studying veterinary medicine at the University of Minnesota five years ago, she knew this is what she wanted to do. "There are more people in the community than those who walk through the doors of veterinary offices," she says. "Those are the people who need help the most, and those are the people I want to help."

Marie is quick to point out the collective nature of the effort, though. "Even the people on really low incomes—people who literally have one fork and one plate to their name—will give me an extra \$3 to go toward the next pet-owner in need," she says. "They understand how important it is. Their pet is their best friend—in many cases, the only living being they interact with on a daily basis. They are so happy to be able to take care of their best friend and want to be able to help others to do so, too."

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