

Maremma Sheepdog Club of America



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Board

of

Please return this application to the above address.

Directors Candidate Biography

Date: 10/13/21

Position(s) running for: Vice President

Name: Kimberly J Crawmer

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Please share a brief biography:

I have been an avid animal lover for my entire life, and my career field has involved animals since I was a teenager. I began my career in 1979 at age 14 when I began working as a bather and brusher at a busy dog (and cat) grooming salon in my home town of Memphis, Tennessee. I was eventually trained to groom all breeds of dogs and cats at this salon and worked there until I got married and moved to Florida. My husband was a career Navy officer who served for 40 years (I came into the picture at the 10 year mark.) so we lived in several states including Florida, Maryland, California, Virginia and the territory of Guam. I worked at various dog grooming shops and veterinary clinics (as a veterinary assistant and groomer) in the different states we lived in. During our tour on Guam I operated a licensed pet grooming salon, Island Pet Grooming, that was highly successful, particularly during the period of time that I was the only groomer on the island. (No competition!)

My career as a groomer and veterinary assistant introduced me to a large variety of dogs, including Livestock Guardian Breeds such as Great Pyrenes, Kuvaz and

Komondor. I have groomed and worked with both very common and more rare breeds of dogs and learned an incredible amount from all of them.

During the same time that I began my career as a groomer I also began breeding American Cocker Spaniels. I bred Cockers for a couple of decades and though I have owned other breeds over the years and worked with countless others I never found another breed I loved as much as my beloved Cockers or enough to want to breed again, until I bought my first Maremma. It didn't take long for this amazing breed to steal my heart entirely and now I'm 100% devoted to these incredible dogs. There's something about a dog that would lay down it's life to protect another species that's truly awe inspiring.

I have also had a large variety of pets since I was a child, including many farm animals such as goats, horses, chickens, ducks, rabbits and such. I bought my first horse, an Arabian gelding, with my own money when I was 14 and paid for all of his expenses with the money I earned from my grooming job. I got tired of asking my parents for a horse and went out and bought my own! I have owned at least two horses ever since and up to eleven at a time.

It was my lifelong dream to own a farm but because of my husband's Navy career that dream had to mostly be put on hold. We did rent a farm for a time in Maryland and we owned a 12 acre farm in Virginia for a few years, complete with dairy goats and a variety of poultry, in addition to the horses, before we took orders back to California. The rest of the time we boarded our horses in the various states where we were stationed, dragging them from one part of the country to another. (And no, the Navy does not pay for that!) Eventually my husband retired from the Navy and in 2015 I finally realized my lifelong dream (for keeps this time) when we purchased a 9 acre farm in Central California. Better late than never!

Initially I only planned to have my horses and a variety of farm animals for personal use and enjoyment on the farm, including dairy goats and different types of poultry. Goats have always been one of my top three favorite animals and we had successfully raised dairy goats in Virginia, so they were a top priority for the new farm. In order to get goat milk, of course, you must breed the goats and I had learned that registered baby goats sold for a lot more than unregistered so that's the direction I decided to go in. Being an entrepreneur at heart I decided why not start a business while I was at it, so Prancing Pony Farm was created. I started with six Nigerian Dwarf goats, then added Mini Nubians shortly after. Eventually my herd grew until today it hovers around 75/80 registered Nigerian Dwarfs, Mini Nubians and standard Nubians, with a kid crop of 100-150 kids a year.

Because I had boarded my horses at various places throughout the years I had come to realize that "Lassie" was a myth. Every place I boarded at had some type of herding dog, and these dogs spent a considerable amount of time doing what herding dogs do best - chasing and harassing the horses! I knew that was not going to work with goats or poultry, so I began researching Livestock Guardian Dogs. We'd had only minor small predator problems in Virginia but I knew our new California farm was in a very active coyote area and that my goats and other animals didn't stand a chance without a LGD.

So I began my search for a LGD. I narrowed it down to two breeders, one who bred registered Great Pyrenees and one who bred MSCA Maremmas, but who was selling his puppies unregistered. The Maremma breeder explained to me how Maremmas hadn't had all their working instinct bred out of them like many other breeds had, and how they didn't usually escape and wander like other breeds. We live on a busy road and my first Cocker Spaniel had been hit and killed by a car when I was a teen, so a dog that would respect fences and stay home and safe was very important to me. So I bought the 5 month old Maremma puppy, whom we named Olaf, and it was one of the best "happy accidents" I've ever had! (My only regret was that I didn't get registration papers for Olaf. At the time I didn't think it mattered as I was only trying to keep my goats safe, but later I wished I had done things differently.)

It didn't take long at all for me to become so impressed by my wonderful new Maremma that I had to have another, and another and.... So impressed was I, in fact, that I eventually decided to breed Maremmas. My goats and other animals have great value to me and my family, both "monetary" value and "sentimental" (love) value. If anything happened to them we would be devastated. Our Maremmas were so important to the safety and well-being of my own animals that I was sure I could help people like me by breeding them. I had my first litter in 2017 and have had eleven litters total since then. My pups are in working homes all over California as well as several other states. I keep in touch with my families and have had nothing but positive feedback on my pups.

I have learned so much from these amazing dogs and have worked hard to improve my breeding program, eventually transitioning from breeding unregistered to registered Maremmas. I have taken many dog training and breeder courses which I incorporate into my puppy training and socialization program. I raise my puppies with livestock from birth but also give them extensive socialization with humans and a variety of experiences for happy, safe, well-adjusted LGD's. All of my breeding dogs are PennHip tested (with excellent scores) and some are also OFA hip and elbow tested. And I am proud to say that I recently became a MSCA Code of Ethics breeder, which was a very long and hard journey from where I started!

I now have fourteen amazing Maremmas on my farm, keeping all of my animals safe and keeping me company as I make my rounds every day doing farm chores. My Maremmas are both valuable "employees" in my business and beloved family members.

Experience you have that would be helpful in this Board position?

Besides the life-long experience working with animals in general and dogs in particular I run a business breeding dairy goats on a large scale as well as breeding 4-5 litters of Maremmas a year. I'm responsible for the care of 150-200 or more animals every day, for overseeing those who assist me in my business, dealing with vendors and various contractors on farm projects and with all the aspects of running a farm and business. I interact with dozens of customers and potential customers a week, fielding phone calls, emails, texts and social media messages. I have a very well ranked and up to date website that gets quite a lot of traffic and inquiries as well as a strong following on social media through my Facebook and Instagram business

accounts. I have customers visiting regularly to pick up animals and am very good at interacting with people from all walks of life. Because I am a farmer myself I understand exactly what my customers need in a LGD and that is what I breed and how I raise my pups.

My 30 years as a Navy wife have also served me well in being able to meet and interact with people from all backgrounds and adapt to new situations and new duty stations. In preparation for my husband's tour as Commanding Officer of FRC West in Lemoore, California I attended the one week Naval Spouse Leadership Course in Rhode Island, as well as Ombudsman training and was an active member of the CO/XO Spouses group.

I worked for several years as a Program Coordinator for Compass USA, an agency that places foreign exchange students in host families for a few weeks to a few months. I worked with several new families and students every year, first interviewing and selecting the host families and educating them on what hosting a student would entail, then giving similar training to the students when they arrived, then checking in regularly with students and families during their stay and dealing with any issues that came up. Our family also hosted over two dozen foreign exchange students in our own home during my time with Compass USA. Because other cultures are so different from American culture and because the students often had a false idea of what American life is really like (based on TV and movies) my job required an incredible amount of flexibility, adaptability and diplomacy. Try nicely but firmly explaining to a spoiled French teenaged girl that Americans really don't go shopping and out to eat every day and to Disneyland every weekend and that she came here to learn about daily American life (which is often quite boring) and not for a vacation, and that her host family are not her servants!

I homeschooled our six children all the way through high school, which definitely stretches you in ways you can't imagine! As does being a grandmother to soon-to-be twelve grandchildren! You want to talk about dealing with drama and meltdowns? I've got more experience with that than you can imagine! As well as enough experience to realize that the drama is sometimes necessary and helps the family (or club) grow stronger. Sweeping problems under the rug doesn't make them go away. It only makes them fester.

I have been involved in various clubs and organizations such as homeschool groups and coops, horse clubs and boarding coops, 4H, scouts, parent organizations, Navy spouses groups and more. I am organized, creative, flexible and adaptable and work well with others, even if we have differences.

Why do you want to hold this position on the Maremma Sheepdog Club of America Board of Directors?

I love this breed and am passionate about promoting it and helping anyone who owns Maremmas to be successful with their dogs. I think the MSCA has a lot of potential to help Maremma owners and enthusiasts everywhere and I want to do my part.

Also, the club itself is in great need of help right now and I firmly believe that if you're not part of the solution you're part of the problem. I understand that being on a BOD is a volunteer position and feel that members really shouldn't complain unless they are willing to do their part to make things better, at whatever level they are capable of. Running for the BOD is my effort to make things better for my club and my breed.

Any further information you would like the Membership to know about you?

I do not claim to be an expert in any way, shape or fashion. I don't believe there's any "right" or "wrong" way to do most things, including breeding dogs. There's just "right for me". I breed dogs (and goats) that work for me and my customers but I fully support and respect all reputable breeders in doing things their way. I am an autodidact who believes learning is never "done" therefore I am always open to learning new things and changing how I do something if I discover a better way.

I have always marched to the beat of my own drum. My life is an oxymoron. I don't fit neatly into any category. I don't do cliques or play mean girl games. (Though I'm not opposed to a little good-natured teasing once in a while. It's a family trait.) I give everyone the benefit of the doubt and treat everyone fairly. I was never the popular kid in school. Quite the opposite, in fact. The most common thing people wrote in my high school yearbook was "You should talk more." I don't do small talk well and had nothing in common with most of them so I didn't see the point. I never fit in during school and was very shy. School was torture, really. The place I was happiest was with my animals. I was different when I was around them and around people who shared my passion for them. And I will never, ever forget the moment when I sold my first Cocker Spaniel puppy. I was a teenager and this adult man was listening to me talk about my dogs, viewing me as the expert, totally interested in what I had to say and respectful of my opinion and experience with dogs, even at my young age. That was when I truly knew, this was what I was born to do.

What is your vision for the future of the MSCA?

The MSCA has so much untapped potential to serve this amazing breed and the people who love it. I would like to see the MSCA as **the** resource for all American Maremma owners, registered or not. There is so much misinformation out there and the dogs, their owners and the stock the dogs guard often suffer because of it. My customers often ask me where they can find information about Maremmas and I have very little I feel comfortable recommending to them. The MSCA website is one place I do direct them to but even that is limited. I would love to see a lot more information on training, puppy socialization, health, health testing, nutrition and so much more. This doesn't need to be from any one perspective but from a variety of members coming together to share what they have learned from their experience with the breed, in whatever format they are most comfortable with. People can pick and choose what seems right for them from these offerings. This will not only help Maremma owners everywhere but will make our jobs as breeders easier if we have a central place we can direct our families to for information.

What are your top 3 priorities for the MSCA in the next three years?

Accountability: The club has so much potential but has suffered greatly in the past year and a half. I believe that's because too much was left to one or two people, whether that was intentional or not. If we have a fully functioning BOD (and potentially other members willing to volunteer for projects) there is no reason for all the burden to fall to a few people and no reason for anything like this to ever happen again. We need a system of checks and balances to ensure that the club is functioning properly and smoothly and that important tasks such as processing paperwork and answering inquiries get done in a timely manner. This might involve regular board meetings (Zoom? Skype?), all BOD members getting at least a basic training in the other positions, or something yet unthought of, but we need to find a way to ensure that the club functions much more smoothly in the future.

Community: We all come from different backgrounds and have different views on lots of different things but we have one thing in common and that is this amazing breed that we all love. Humans need community just as our dogs do. We are spread all across the country (and maybe some in other countries) so obviously we can't have doggie playdates and ice cream socials but we have this incredible (and sometimes scary) tool called social media. I personally enjoy connecting with people with similar interests on social media, asking questions, sharing stories and photos, sometimes doing a little necessary crying or venting. The best groups are the tight knit ones where many people know each other because of all the discussions they've engaged in. I have many "friends" I've never met in person but know through those types of groups. I'd like to see us have that kind of group and those kinds of friendships, all based on our wonderful dogs.

Community Outreach and Education: As stated previously I would like to see the MSCA become the unequivocal authority on the breed and the place where people go for information and resources, be it on breeding, health, training or anything at all related to Maremmas.

Thank you for your consideration.