

## Special Use Permit application #PL22-0133 (Predators of the Heart)

Dear Mr. Hearing Examiner,

Growing up around POTH, I always knew to be weary of them. They moved in next door when I was a young child, and my parents always made it clear to be careful and leery of POTH. I remember the wolves getting out often, and my parents always told me to stay inside as they were scared for my safety. I also remember seeing Dave walking his wolves down our road on leashes. They were much bigger than I had imagined at the time. When I asked my dad why Dave did this, he told me Dave was trying to get us to warm up to the wolves. I remember when rat problems began due to the way POTH feeds their animals, and ravens coming in and flying off with their food. I even remember one time my dad had a raven drop a piece of meat on the grill he was cooking on.

As an adult that moved back to this property, I always knew to be cautious when outside. I wish I had known just how cautious I should have been, though. On October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021, I awoke to find three wolves had killed my dog. I exited my home at my mother in laws screams, was told to get back inside by my father, and that is when 3 wolves rounded my car, and one had my dead dog in its mouth. I began to scream and sob. My family attempted to contact POTH without success. It was not until the wolves had been out for over 25 minutes that a POTH worker finally arrived. For over 25 minutes, I had to watch these wolves play tug of war with my dogs' corpse and continue to attempt to take bites out of him. I will never, ever be able to get those images out of my mind for as long as I live.

After that day, I had hoped Ashley Carr would behave differently than her father, Dave Colburn, but actions since this incident have proven that to be a false hope. Within 2 days, Ashley had made a public statement on her official POTH Facebook page containing flat out lies to attempt to save face for her organization. The first lie was that the attack was provoked. Not only was my dog in my house until seconds before he died, the police reports also clarify that this was a wholly unprovoked attack. Next, they said their wolves came upon call. In videos I took that day, you will see this is also false. The wolves repeatedly run away from the POTH employee. That is when I decided to sue.

During the law suit, POTH demanded we sign a confidentiality agreement as well as a non-disparagement clause. This meant we could never talk to anyone about the incident or speak ill of POTH ever again. We refused. Throughout negotiations, POTH would agree to something and later back out. This happened many, many times. We made it clear we would not sign a confidentiality or non-disparagement clause. Once a settlement was finally reached over the course of 8 months, they backed out again, demanding yet again a confidentiality and non-disparagement clause. They wanted to keep me quiet. They did not want the public or anyone else to know the truths about that day. Luckily, my lawyer suggested we try to settle with the insurance company separate from POTH. This meant I would not get my public apology I wanted POTH to make to set the record straight and admit to their lies, as well as take responsibility for the incident. But I agreed anyways.

To this day, almost 2 years later, I have yet to receive any form of an apology from POTH regarding the incident.

On Ashley Carr's live videos on Facebook for POTH, she claimed that there were dig patterns outside of the escaped hole and that the fence was pulled to the side. She did not realize my family took

photos of the hole from that day. As you can see in photos I submitted to our attorneys, these are false statements.

Ashley also claimed in her live videos on Facebook for POTH that they had to put a wolf down after the incident with my dog. If you look at the police reports, this was never a requirement. But POTH did put down one wolf. The question for me is, why??? If they are there to protect and care for these animals, why did they put one down when they did not have to???

In another live video Ashley made on TikTok for POTH, Ashley said they tried to 'make it right' with us by giving us \$50,000. This is also a lie, as you will see from my statement above, as they fought us tooth and nail on any settlement, and we ended up having to settle separately from them.

Through all my experiences with POTH over the course of 20+ years, it is VERY clear to me they are not an honest organization and they are run by awful humans.

Moreover, I am so scared for my child every time she is outside since this incident. I did not let her play outside for about 6 months after this event, and now will not allow her outside without being right there with her. She knows she cannot go anywhere I can't see her when we play outside as well, as I am terrified of what a wolf might do to my child if one escaped again. My child just turned 5, and has feared the wolves that 'killed Oakley' since she was 3. I also do not let my dog outside without supervision and she is always, always on a leash. I am exhausted by not feeling safe in my own front yard because of POTH.

I implore you, please, please do not allow Predators of the Heart to continue working in Skagit County.

-Breanne Kozera

Dear Mr. Hearing Examiner,

The safety of the local neighborhood is currently in jeopardy due to a lack of responsible management of the POTH property. The cyclone fencing is wholly inadequate in containing the animals, as evidenced by the history of them escaping their enclosures. The APD has dozens of encounters on file due to the owners lack of knowledge and lack of adequate containment practices. I'm sure the Sheriff's Department has a similar record trail.

As evidenced by the most recent escape by three wolves digging out under the fence resulted in them attacking and killing the neighbors family dog on the neighbor's property, not POTH's property. One wolf was the instigator and then others quickly chimed in once the dismembering of the dog commenced. This incident was witnessed and video recorded by one of the family members. That would be something that should never be experienced by anyone, and can't be unseen.

The shame of it is that the owner of POTH then went on Facebook and their webpage and blamed the incident on everything but themselves and fabricated the circumstances before and after the incident. So anyone reading on FB or on their site would think the neighbors are the problem. The owners of POTH took zero responsibility. And tried to buy the silence of the dog's owner on the condition of signing a non-disclosure agreement. This is not an isolated incident. More wolves from POTH attacked and killed another dog on the ACFL trails several years ago. In that incident the two wolves overpowered their caretakers who were leading them on leashes and attacked and killed a dog which was being walked by an elderly man on one of the many ACFL trails that crossed over near and onto POTH property. There was no signage indicating where the legitimate trail ended and POTH property began. The dogs owner took many photographs of the area. However when law officers investigated they found fresh signage on

multiple trees, that was not there during the attack. Just another example of the integrity and honesty of the POTH owners.

There are many young children in the neighborhood, a few toddlers. We have three grandchildren ourselves and we should be able to let them play in our yard and as they get older explore and play on our 5 acre property. That's one of the reasons we moved out here 34 years ago. To be able to enjoy the serene natural beauty this area offers. There is zero regard for our concerns by POTH, just empty promises and/or silence.

No one from POTH lives on the property. So we are the first responders. We would then call them (currently Ashley Carr, previously David Coleburn) and relay the message that their animal(s) are loose or to alert them of an incident (which is what happened last fall when our neighbors dog was killed). They were not aware of the loose animals and only found out when I called Ashley. I also want to mention that their animals did not return on command as Ashley stated on FB and on their webpage. They ran off and it took over 20 minutes to round them up.

In regard to the enclosures, the animals are simply behind cyclone fencing. Even if its double fenced any of the large trees in the area could easily drop the fence to the ground in a windstorm. Trees coming down is a common occurrence out here in the woods during a windstorm.

Another issue is cleanliness, the food scraps that are not consumed by the animals are dumped on the ground. We never had a rat problem before POTH arrived and now we pay for quarterly rat extermination and have seven bait traps and spring loaded traps around our home and garage. The damage multiple rats inflict on our property and possessions is excessive, and is just kind of gross to be honest. I question where the animal waste ends up. There is quite a foul odor up on Mitten Creek that is downstream of the POTH property. That stream runs through a neighbor's property to the north, through our property and eventually ends up at Alexander Beach.

This entire process of now having to deal with a problem perceived or otherwise, depending on your point of view, should never have arisen. With the proper planning, permitting and execution of a well thought out and safe operation we wouldn't be dealing with this issue today. However we do experience the real issues of the above mentioned points. The fear of the "what-ifs" if something does go awfully wrong is real. Their track record doesn't instill confidence that we and our kids and grandkids are safe. The animals are wild at heart, their DNA can't be changed no matter how "domesticated" they are made out to be. They can and will revert to their natural instincts during times of stress or excitement. I also question how such a dominate animal copes with the confinement of their cages? The wolves are predatory and very hierarchy oriented with natural habitat areas ranging many square miles per pack.

We would rather be enjoying our out of the way, quiet and serene properties which was our intent when we moved out here 34 years ago, long before POTH existed. I'm also curious as to the letters of support POTH will receive and where these individuals live. Are they cognizant of the issues we face daily living here?

We shouldn't have any negative impact on the neighborhood, it should be a neutral or positive influence. POTH brings a huge negative and most likely reduces our property values and our peace of mind.

Please consider our concerns and deny the SEPA

Regards,

Dave Knutsen

## **POTH hearing comments from Ed Borlin**

File# PL 22-0133

Dear Mr. Hearing Examiner,

### **POTH Wolf Attack Oct 19<sup>th</sup> 2021 happenings from my prospective (Ed Borlin):**

Around 9 am October 19<sup>th</sup> I started painting trim for downstairs in the garage. It was quiet. After some time had passed, I heard some noise outside the garage, couldn't tell exactly what it was until I heard my daughter's mother-in-law (Rona Cassel) yelling. I immediately knew something was wrong. I immediately opened the garage door and also grabbed some wood clubs! I saw three wolves pulling equally on my daughter Breanne's dog Oakley. Two Large white wolves and one smaller grey/brown/white colored wolf, (I recognized them as part of the POTH Wolves). I immediately told Rona to go back in the trailer and take pictures and video of everything that was going on. My daughter Breanne came out of her trailer and walking around her car unaware that the wolves were right there pulling and ripping Oakley. I told her to get back in the trailer because it was too late Oakley was dead, (I saw his last kick while they ripping on him). I told her to video also. I immediately ran into the house and told my wife to call 911 to tell them that 3 wolves killed Oakley.

I then called my neighbor Dave Knutsen for Ashley or Dave Colburns (POTH Owners) phone number. He said he would call them to let them know that the wolves were out and that they killed Oakley. Dave Knutsen was in North Carolina at the time.

I then got my car keys and drove over to POTH to see if anyone was there. Gate was closed. I then drove to the Johnsons house to see if they had Ashley or Dave Colburns phone number, ( I believe that they are a relative to the Colburn's). They were not home. I drove back towards my house when I found all 3 wolves coming down Welch lane. As I drove towards them they turned around and walked back towards my home and property.

I sat in my car because the wolves were in my front yard. My son-in-law Matt Kozera came driving up with his car honking his car to get the wolves attention. I told him to stay in the car. He had a cane in his hand for defense. He expressed he wanted shoot and kill the wolves and I asked him not to.

Not sure of timing but volunteers (a man and a woman, not Ashley though) from POTH showed up to capture the wolves but they wouldn't cooperate. They ran from them. They moved towards my back yard to capture them there. After several attempts the woman was able to get a leash around one of them and started leading them home.

Kevin Welch (neighbor) came driving down the easement driveway in his white car and stopped where the volunteers were with the wolves.

Went back to console my daughter and family and wait for the sheriff animal control officer Diaz to come and investigate the deadly scene.

## **Welch Lane Easements**

AF # 199406200058 under the *“Literal Interpretation Section”*

*“The literal interpretation of the zoning ordinance would deprive the applicant of the ability to complete a previously started short Plat.”*

*“There have been total of four (this variance makes five) variances considered for the use of this road. Some of the variances overlapped, making for a great deal of confusion in the regard to what is required.”*

*“If the variance is approved, it appears that although, all of the properties accessed by welch lane may not all be developed, once the short plat associated with this parcel is approved, there can no further subdivisions utilizing welch lane. The reason for this is the current interim controls, as well as other regulations.”*

What I remember is that anything after this approval, the road would need to be brought up to county standards because it could not support any more traffic under it's current condition. For whatever reason the short plat that was approved for the POTH property and is in violation of this variance AF # 199406200058 requirements. The real concern is if more traffic is on the current road, it cannot handle the proposed development. This is why county requirements are needing to be implemented upgrading the road to county standards, if for some reason this gets approved.

## **Recurring Uncontained Wild Sanctuary Animals**

Since POTH has been near us there have been several occurrences of their animals getting out of their containment. What I have personally experienced are the foxes, the macaw bird, and three wolves! The three wolves attacked and killed my daughter's dog in front of me and my daughter. This occurred on my property. My immediate neighbors have experienced different loose wolves and cougars. I understand that both Skagit County and City of Anacortes has many more occurrences on record (I have not validated personally but my neighbors have). I know of two instances that we were not notified of animals on the loose, (wolf and a cougar), both were overnight occurrences. In my opinion there is no excuse for wild sanctuary animals getting out of their containment. Even with the promises in the application the plan for upgrading is not enough. With the large trees and the damaging seasonal winds, it is a matter of time that trees would crush the containments allowing wild sanctuary animals to run loose.

## **Personal impact**

We have lived on this property for 30 years. Until POTH joined our neighborhood, we had no rats. Since then, the rats took over 2 storage sheds and totaled our 36-foot Class A motorhome. They ate all the wiring. In the winter rats made nests in my BBQ. It was a \$1800.00 stainless steel BBQ. I had to toss it away! Couldn't stomach the idea of using it again. We now have to set rat food out to keep them from taking over our house and property. Everyone around us does the same thing.

Ravens/Crows have flown over our house with chunks of meat that they picked up from POTH. One time I was Barbecuing on my deck and a chunk landed on my BBQ. Truly disgusting!

## **Life forever impacted**

The trauma that follows an incident is real. The incident is the one where the three wolves dug under the POTH fence and then attacked and killed my daughter's dog. She watched it, so did I! What really bothers me is if my 3 year old granddaughter was out there at the time of the attack. She was at school. To this day I find myself looking over my shoulder all the time. Night-time also is tough to be out on my property. We routinely have family and friends over including grandkids. We have to keep a close eye on them in case wolves show up again. This is a very big concern!

## **Odors**

Currently there is a sewage smell by the POTH south fence line. I mention that because in the past there have been odors that have come from the POTH property that smells dead. In fact it draws turkey buzzards, ravens and eagles overhead. Summertime is when it gets really bad.

## **Community is very naive**

In all fairness the surrounding communities are pretty naive about the POTH impact. Some may hear the wolves howl from a distance and may enjoy it. But being right next to them is different. Mostly the wolves and the macaw's. The social media following is rattled with false accusations and praise only to mask the neighborhood nuisance and fears outside the fence line. They just don't know what's true! Most of their input is not valid.

## **Conclusion**

When all is said and done it's not the wild sanctuary animal's fault for being noisy, producing terrible odors, getting out of their containment, attacking... it is the owners of POTH. It's location is in the wrong place! It should have never been allowed to be so close to the Anacortes community lands/neighborhoods. The current traffic is already too much for Welch Lane so approving this application cannot be supported by Welch Lane and cannot meet county road standards for proper traffic control. That's why I think that it is time to stop this train wreck now.



**Confused**

1. How a sanctuary can operate as an air bnb,(non-profit).
2. How a facility can be unmanned for 20+ hours a day maybe even more.
3. How often a sanctuary is inspected to meet county standards/requirements.
4. How can a sanctuary continue to breed wolves and be sold for profit. It's for rescued animals and a non-profit facility, I thought?

Sincerely,

Edward P Borlin Jr.

August 21, 2023

Skagit County Hearing Examiner  
1800 Continental Place  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273  
Submitted via email

**RE: Special Use Permit application #PL22-0133 submitted by Predators of the Heart**

Dear Skagit County Hearing Examiner:

My name is Ed Clauson and my comments regarding the Special Use Permit application are attached.

Sincerely,

Ed Clauson  
Anacortes Resident

# P.O.T.H. Wolves

25 Years

To whom it may concern...

My name is Ed Clauson, I have been working for Integra & the Welch family for twenty five years. I built his house and have been in charge of all projects for Integra — my office is on the Welch property. I have driven the access driveway with borders the P.O.T.H. property every work day several times a day — driven past wolves on the P.O.T.H. property hundreds if not thousands of times in the last 25 years.

In all this times I have observed many times — maybe a half dozen times.



when animals have escaped, wolves mainly — also up until the last few years — employees would "walk" the wolves several times a week on a leash, in the ACFL.

That practice came to an end when two wolves encountered a person walking their dog — despite being on a leash the two wolves attacked and killed the pet dog. The first time this happened — I actually heard the crying dog and saw the aftermath. — It was not reported, that I know of — The second attack that year was reported — I didn't witness it — saw it in the paper.



after the second pet was killed — wolf "walking" stopped. They did, however still escape → when ever a tree fell on the fence, I assisted in recovering individuals several times, — seems the wolves were OK with people (adults) — but they would kill other animals → (- on contact)

The daily howling was interesting — I didn't live nearby, so it didn't bother me, but I wouldn't want to live close by.

I have no axe to grind on the P.O.H. dilemma — just wanted to inform people about my experience with the wolves. Contact me if you need more. Ed Clauson, Anacortes.



This is an open statement to the Skagit County Commissioners and Permit Hearing Officer to express my concerns and views regarding the wild animal compound, known to me as Predators of the Heart (POTH). My name is George Hettich. My wife, Laura, and I resided at 4653 Welch Lane from 2005 until 2015. We moved to 14371 Rosario Rd, about 4 miles south. On June 9, 2023, we again moved to Medford OR. In our absence from Welch Lane, we have been aware of the continuing problems concerning POTH through contact with our former neighbors and the media, and it has not been pretty! I cannot speak firsthand about events since 2015, but I am sure there is much firsthand documentation available.

A very relevant point: a major reason for our moving from Welch Lane was the continuing nuisance and danger posed by the proximity of POTH. However, our move was marred by a financial loss on our property. We lost approximately \$100,000 from our invested cost and many improvements over 10 years of ownership! Our real estate broker informed us of prospective buyers' resistance to the proximity of POTH. After a number of months on the market, we accepted a low-ball offer. Depreciated property value should be of concern to both County residents and officials!

I submit this statement to be entered into the record of this hearing. I also submit copies of my letter to Commissioner Ron Wesen dated Jan. 6, 2012, and a copy of my submission at the public hearing in 2014.

In my opinion, POTH has been and continues to be operated in an irresponsible and dangerous manner. I believe this permit should not be approved. To my knowledge, two dogs have been killed by POTH's wolves since I moved from Welch Lane. Will this hazard be allowed to continue until a **child** becomes victim?

Respectfully submitted,

George Hettich  
2305 Quail Point Circle  
Medford OR

Aug. 4, 2023

# Appendix A



George L. Hettich, Jr.  
4653 Welch Lane  
Anacortes WA 98221

Jan. 6 , 2012

Mr. Ron Wesen, Skagit County Commissioner  
1800 Continental Place, Suite 100  
Mt. Vernon WA 98273

Ref: Dangerous Wild Animal Compound in Skagit County adjacent to Anacortes

Dear Commissioner Wesen:

Thank you for your help and consideration concerning the referenced matter. I thought it may be helpful to you if I stated my concerns in letter form, in addition to our phone conversations. The facility is called Predators of the Heart (web: [www.predatorsoftheheart.com](http://www.predatorsoftheheart.com)). The location is undisclosed on the site, but is located adjacent to our property off Welch Lane near Anacortes. The principal is Dave Coleburn, who resides in Skyline (Anacortes). The animals held there are cougar, bobcats, various species of wolves, raptors, reptiles (snakes and alligators). The actual number of each is unknown to me, but presumed many, as the wolves and cats can be heard during the day and night from within our closed home.

We have a number of concerns as close neighbors to this compound:

- **Safety**
- **Procreation**
- **Noise**
- **Property resale value**
- **Permitting, enforcement, inspection, and liability**

I outline our concerns in the above order.

### **Safety**

1. We and other neighbors have either small children, domestic pets or both.
2. No one living on site - no caretaker, no apparent security - ELF (Earth Liberation Front) or other mischief possible? See Zanesville, Ohio, Oct 19, 2011 - fortunate no one was harmed.
3. Security of construction of pens and cages. Are there codes and regulations for procedures? Wolves have gotten out in past.
4. Timbered area - Wind storm or fire leading to breach in cages.
5. Animals seen on ropes being walked on adjacent roads by owner and presumed volunteers.
6. Animal food is a food source for feeding ravens and other vermin - increase in rats and coyotes.
7. We and other neighbors are on well - animal waste disposal system sufficient?
8. Compound is adjacent to "D Ave. Park" Anacortes - real problem if wolves or cats get loose.

### **Procreation**

1. Are there limits to the number of wild animal allowed?
2. It would appear animals are being bred or allowed to breed - we have heard wolf pups. We have seen both wolf pups and cougar kittens while they were being walked by their owner off premises.

### **Noise**

1. We hear the wolves howling and the large cats growling inside our closed home daily, night and day. It should be no secret as to the location of this compound.
2. Feeding Ravens make a racket during the day and drop food within the neighborhood.

### **Property Resale Value**

1. Disclosure or not, prospective buyers would be less likely to purchase adjacent real estate without a substantial discount.
2. When we purchased our property, we believe the compound was not in existence.

### **Permitting, Enforcement and Inspection**

1. Checking Skagit Assessors Web Site, compound sited on parcel P128398. Land use stated as "Household Outside City" No record of filing for permits or use variance.
2. Land conveyed to William and Denise Coleburn 6/11/2009. Assume Dave Coleburn known as William?
3. We understand a private party may keep wild animals if granted a permit by the WA State Fish and Wildlife. If so, what are the terms and conditions of this permit and who is responsible for inspection and enforcement?
4. Principal claims on web site to have Federal "USDA license and insurance". If so, what are the terms and how is this reconciled with State Statute 1418 and or Fish and Wildlife License?
5. If an accident should occur, resulting in property damage, injury, or death, how are we and the public at large protected and indemnified?
6. If an unintended release or animal escape should occur, first responders would undoubtedly react. How would these costs be covered?

Again, thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your help in resolving our concerns.

Sincerely,

George L. Hettich, Jr.

Ph: 360/293-0324

email: glhettich@frontier.com

# Appendix B

Feb. 4, 2014

Commissioners, my name is George Hettich. I have prepared a statement in favor of adoption of the Dangerous Animal Ordinance. I will read and leave it with you.

We own our home at 4653 Welch Lane, in the county, just outside the Anacortes city limits. We are animal lovers and have always had pets.

Our property is approximately 150 yards from the Predators of the Heart Compound, which I will refer to as POTH. When we moved here, this compound did not exist, but was moved here after Anacortes enacted their animal ordinance. According to city records, this was enacted due to a large number of neighborhood complaints about POTH, then located within the city. These complaints were similar to ours. We do not disagree with anyone's mission of working with children. But, we do challenge an operation that infringes on our rights to a safe, healthful and peaceful home environment. Here are the facts:

1. POTH has demonstrated their inability to control their animals. This is well documented by my personal sightings, others, and by law enforcement. Safety is our concern.
  - i. POTH compound adjoins the well used Anacortes Forest Lands.
  - ii. The compound is in close proximity to over 60 homes, in county and city.
  - iii. POTH personnel and volunteers walk dangerous animals on leads through the area.
  - iv. There is no one living on the premises to act in an emergency.
  
2. POTH has grown from a few animals in 2009 to what has become a "zoo", with over 100 animals. These activities are advertised on their website:
  - i. Breeding wolf-dog puppies for public sale.
  - ii. Holding open houses and parties for fee.
  - iii. Conducting tours for fee.

3. There are health issues:
  - i. Wolves howling and large cats growling are heard day and night inside our closed home.
  - ii. Wild birds (ravens, crows, hawks & eagles) are allowed to feed on raw meat used as animal food. They drop it throughout the neighborhood. It is then available for children, pets and wild vermin to consume. The population of rats, coyotes, mice and other vermin has multiplied.
  - iii. There are apparently no electrical or waste systems on premises. Fecal and other wastes are problematic. Wet lands there, drain by a creek that flows through our property and others' on the way to the Sound.
  
4. Our property and our near neighbors' properties, including POTH, are zoned "Rural Residential".
  - i. There is no one residing within the compound.
  - ii. There have been no permits issued for land use, waste systems, cut and fill, etc..
  - iii. There are upwards of 60 homes nearby.
  - iv. POTH has become a large commercial operation.
  - v. Our private roads are not designed for commercial traffic.
  - vi. Our properties will depreciate through decreased resale value, a certain result.

In conclusion, the principle owner of POTH lives some 6 miles distant. He does not have to contend with the problems of his making, as we do. He has stated that even with a predator on the loose, no one was injured. Should we wait for a child, woman or man to be killed or maimed before action is taken? We encourage the Board of commissioners to adopt the proposed ordinance. Thank you for your consideration.

George and Laura Hettich  
4653 Welch Lane  
Anacortes WA 98221  
ph: 360/293-0324  
email: [glhettich@frontier.com](mailto:glhettich@frontier.com)

# Appendix C

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**IN THE SUPERIOR COURT  
FOR SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

SKAGIT COUNTY, a municipal corporation  
of the State of Washington,

Plaintiff,

vs.

WILLIAM COLEBURN, DENISE  
COLEBURN, husband and wife, and  
PREDATORS OF THE HEART, a  
Washington non-profit Corporation,

Defendants.

NO. 15-2-00509-2

DECLARATION OF GEORGE HETTICH

George Hettich declares:

I am over the age of 18 years and competent to testify regarding the matters asserted herein. I live at 4653 Welch Lane, near William and Denise Coleburn's property at 4709 Welch Lane, Anacortes, Washington. This area is located outside of the city limits of Anacortes, in unincorporated Skagit County. I have lived here since 2005.

I make the following declaration based upon my own personal knowledge.

I am aware that William Coleburn acquired ownership of the property at 4709 Welch Lane in the early 2000s, sold it to Richard and Diana Johnson with an agreement that they would

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subdivide the property and sell 10 acres back to him. This occurred in 2009. After that date, he began housing and breeding animals more animals on the property. This increased the noise level in what had been a very quiet neighborhood. His wolves howl and their pups yip. The cougars screech. I also began to hear the animals fighting. This sounded horrible. My wife and I have resorted to using ear plugs at night to be able to sleep when the noise from the animals on David Coleburn's property was too loud. This need arises primarily in the summertime when we leave our windows open. I have not resorted to ear plugs in the winter, but have been awakened in the middle of the night and early morning by the animals' noises.

In 2009 or 2010 I found two of David Coleburn's wolves in my yard. One came into my garage. I contacted David Coleburn and he admitted that there was a hole in the animals' pen.

More recently, two of David Coleburn's foxes have escaped. I took a picture of the recent escape, within the last year.

I am aware that another wolf escaped and after being placed in the Anacortes animal control officer's vehicle, chewed up the car's interior.

These escapes raise concern for my family's, including my grandchildren's, safety and the safety of my current pet, a golden doodle. I have had two cats disappear and not return to my property.

Another problem that affected me was caused by David Coleburn's feeding practices. He fed his animals raw meet, slabs of ribs, raw sausage, and slices of lunch meat without cleaning up the leftovers. This left plenty of scraps for eagles and ravens to steal. I have seen birds flying from David Coleburn's property with raw meat in their beaks and have discovered many pieces of meat, sausage, etc. fall into my yard. I have found my dog trying to eat these pieces of meat. When I have not been able to get it away from him, he has suffered from diarrhea. I called David Coleburn to complain several times about this practice, which also fosters an increase of rats and coyotes in the neighborhood. David Coleburn told me that he put frozen food out to thaw and was leaving the scraps for the birds to eat. He also said that he would quit placing the scraps out for the birds, but then started the practice again. William Coleburn basically told me to mind my own business the last time I complained to him. The last time I found scraps of meat in my yard



1 was earlier this year in the late spring. Having tired of complaining to William Coleburn without  
2 resolution, I did not talk to him last spring.

3           Should David Coleburn ever complete an application for a permit to keep these animals  
4 on his property, I would testify about the need for controls to prevent escapes; for feeding  
5 practices to avoid the spread of waste food, rats, coyotes, and disease; and for noise control.

6           I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that the  
7 foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

8           Dated this 5<sup>TH</sup> day of NOVEMBER, 2015 at Mount Vernon, Washington.

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August 21, 2023

Skagit County Hearing Examiner

1800 Continental Place

Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Submitted via email

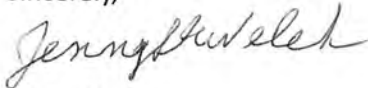
**RE: Special Use Permit Application #PL22-0133 Submitted by Predators of the Heart**

Dear Skagit County Hearing Examiner:

My name is Jenny Welch. My husband and I have owned our property next to the Forest Lands since the mid-1990's before the Predators of the Heart moved next door. I have prayed through the years, as the adverse effects of their operation have escalated, that a "win-win" solution would present itself. I care about the well-being of all my neighbors including Predators of the Heart and those adversely affected by them. However, I see no longevity for Predators of the Heart in their current location due to the proximity to public hiking trails and the numerous incidents throughout the neighborhood and Forest Lands of Predator's hybrid, homebred wolves escaping, attacking, and damaging pet dogs and property. Will a child be next? Or even an adult? Trained as a trauma/ICU nurse, I can't help but think of the potential threats to safety and the responsibility our community has in mitigating them.

Thank you for hearing my comments. I am not in favor of any special use permit at this location.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jenny Welch".

Jenny Welch

Neighbor of Predators of the Heart

August 21, 2023

Skagit County Hearing Examiner  
1800 Continental Place  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273  
Submitted via email

**RE: Special Use Permit application #PL22-0133 submitted by Predators of the Heart**

Dear Skagit County Hearing Examiner:

My name is Kevin Welch and I live with my wife on the property immediately west of Predators of the Heart (POTH). I have lived here since purchasing the property in December of 1995, long before POTH moved here. My wife and I raised our children here and they grew up hiking and biking on our land and in the adjacent Anacortes Community Forest Lands (ACFL).

POTH relocated to the property adjacent to ours in 2002 after being forced to move out of Anacortes due to numerous animal control violations. Almost immediately my family began to be directly and negatively impacted by POTH and its operations. These negative impacts continue to this day.

The issues we encounter on a frequent basis include:

**A. Safety Concerns**

- a. Two local pets have been killed by escaped wolves and I have personally witnessed at least 6 other escapes. I have also seen leashed exotic animals being walked on my driveway led by inexperienced volunteers.
- b. The City of Anacortes posts signs in the ACFL warning visitors to be on the lookout for escaped wolves. They would not do this if they were unconcerned about safety.
- c. I have been threatened physically by POTH employees because of my opposition to their operation. The most notable event was when the POTH Director and a member of the militia showed up at my house of worship carrying weapons looking for a confrontation. It was only after the pastor called law enforcement did they leave.
- d. We live in a densely forested area where trees routinely fall, blocking roadways and taking down fences, etc. I am concerned that with no one living on the POTH property a tree could fall and animals could easily escape before being noticed. Looking from my driveway into POTH's property I can see trees that are at risk of falling or some that have fallen on some of their outer fences with no repairs being made.
- e. POTH appears to rely heavily on volunteers to operate their business. I have personally observed these volunteers and spoken with them while they walked exotic animals on my driveway and property. I see no evidence that they have the training and experience to take care of dangerous exotic animals.

**B. Access & Road Maintenance Concerns**

- a. All the roads in our neighborhood are residential in nature and were never designed for commercial use. In addition, these roads are failing (numerous potholes, broken pavement,

KPW

etc) and need to be upgraded. Thus far POTH has refused to assist in any way with the costs of installing and/or maintaining our shared roads.

- b. A particular area of concern is the steep portion of Welch Lane – in periods of inclement weather this is impassable with 2-wheel drive vehicles and without foreknowledge and experience people using the road when icy can easily end up in the ditch.

**C. Nuisance Concerns**

- a. I have found dead escaped POTH animals on my property (foxes) – these were clearly not indigenous foxes; but finding exotic animals dead on your property is clearly a nuisance.
- b. We have experienced a rat infestation since POTH moved in. We believe this stems from the time when POTH bred rats as food for their animals. The rats have found their way into our house and sometimes eaten the wiring harnesses on our vehicles. We consider this a nuisance that we should not have to put up with.
- c. The gate to my property is frequently mistaken as the POTH entrance despite signs to the contrary. When POTH is operating, I routinely get lost guests pressing my call button looking for the facility. This is a real and persistent nuisance.

**D. Sewage & garbage**

- a. During times of rain the ditch alongside my driveway and adjacent to POTH smells like raw sewage and animal waste. POTH's compound is the only property that drains into this ditch. I have no idea how POTH disposes of animal waste, deceased animals, etc but I have never seen a garbage truck servicing their property.

**E. Noise Concerns**

- a. While noise is not a major issue for me, it is for many of the other neighbors. Even though my house is about 0.25 miles from POTH I can frequently hear the wolves howling.
- b. I have filed numerous formal and informal noise complaints with the county over the years, but unfortunately they have yet to take enforcement action.
- c. The noise issue remains a significant nuisance to all close by, so much so that some neighbors have resorted to wearing earplugs when sleeping with their windows open.

These issues have been going on for decades and recently come to a head again when 3 wolves escaped and killed a neighborhood dog. I personally witnessed the aftermath of this attack and am very thankful that no children who live in the immediate neighborhood were harmed.

In closing and speaking as one who lives in the neighborhood and who has been dealing with this issue for over 20 years I **urge the hearing examiner to support the county's well founded recommendation and deny the permit application**; however but if you decide to grant the permit I would respectfully request that POTH be required to satisfy ALL the permit requirements BEFORE being allowed to operate.

Sincerely,

*Kevin P Welch*

Kevin P Welch  
Welch Lane Neighbor

File # PL 22-0133

Dear Mr. Hearing Examiner,

POTH has been a fear to my family since it came to the neighboring property. My children have seen fox that had gotten out, wandering thru our property. We have seen a parrot that was flying all over our property, and, of course, all the wolf escapes. A neighbor that is not a part of the law suit, told us the owner knocked on their door asking for a flashlight because a cougar had gotten out. We have 3, 5 & 9 year-old grandkids that play here in our yard A LOT. I don't believe we should be afraid, in our own yard, but we are.

When the wolves dug out of their closure and came onto our property and killed our daughter's sweet little dog, we could find no one on the POTH property to come get their wolves, we had to call a neighbor that was on vacation that had the owners phone number. A tree could fall on the wolves, or cougars' enclosure and no one would even know, until something bad happened. We know all too well the result of the wolves getting out of their enclosure and coming onto our property.

My daughters' dog had no chance against those 3 wolves and the horrible, for lack of a better word, PTSD that we have all experienced from this attack. Constantly looking toward the direction the wolves came running from-checking again and again to be sure they aren't coming. Playing over and over in my head what I would do if they did come running.

We have found, in the past, all companies ordered to do inspections, etc. regarding POTH are too busy to get this done. And POTH gets overlooked. There was not supposed to be any wolves mating and producing more wolf pups, and now, acknowledged by Ashley, not one wolf on the property was a rescue. They have all been birthed on the property. And continue to mate...

We acquired this property in 1992 and POTH came much later. We love our property and life we have built here but, quite frankly, I don't believe any amount of fencing can 100% guarantee that no animal will escape and come, once again, onto our property and do harm to my family. We should not have to move from our property to feel safe again. Poth should be required to move somewhere that is not around any family homes.

Thank you for your time,

Lynne Borlin

## Special Use Permit application #PL22-0133 (Predators of the Heart)

Dear Mr. Hearing Examiner,

My wife, daughter and I have lived next to POTH at the southern property line for over 6 years. The property line we live on literally goes up to the fence.

At night, we can hear all the wolves howling, which is alarming and unsettling when you are trying to go to sleep. It also worries my daughter when she hears it. We must reassure her that she is safe and that we will always protect her.

Countless occasions I have walked outside to our back yard and have seen multiple wolves standing at the fence line staring at me. This is very alarming when they are big enough to come up to my rib cage.

On one occasion, a few years ago while I was at work, I got a message from my in-laws the wolves had gotten out again and were in our back yard at home. So, my pregnant wife, mother-in-law, and small dog Oakley were all careful to stay inside to stay safe. They could not let our little dog out to pee. It made me feel helpless because I was at work and could do nothing to help ensure my family's safety. It is disheartening to be in a position where you are far away and are unable to comfort your pregnant wife in this dangerous situation. Thankfully nothing violent happened during this particular escape.

On the incident of October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021, around 9 am, I was at work when I got a phone call from my mother that the wolves have escaped again and had just killed my wife's small dog, Oakley, in front of her. So, I dropped everything and drove straight home. As I pulled in the driveway, 2 of the wolves had my father-in-law trapped in his car, circling the vehicles. As I parked, they did the same to me. One wolf was staring into my eyes through the window in what felt like an intense way. At one point I saw my wife hanging out of the door of our home screaming at the wolves. That is when I saw one start to approach her. I grabbed a stick from my car and darted into my in-law's house so I could grab my gun to protect us from these giant and deadly wolves. By the time I came out with my gun, the people from POTH were finally on the property "attempting" to round up these dangerous animals. They struggled to collect these animals as they kept running from the employees. Finally, they got ahold of their wolves and brought them back to their property, so luckily, I did not have to use my gun, thank God. After they had gotten their wolves back, right before animal control officer Emily Diaz showed up, I finally started hearing the crackling of the electric fence being turned on. I did not hear it once up until this point. This tells me that they don't always have their fence on for safety, which is a problem since there have been times there was nobody present on the premises to watch these dangerous animals. This shows me there's a lack of concern about the containment and safety of these animals.

We now are afraid to let our other small dog outside without being on a leash and having either my wife or I present to ensure her safety. We also do not let our daughter outside of the house without at least one person with her at all times to keep an eye out for her safety. My daughter is now constantly worried and afraid of the wolves coming to get her since this incident. I do not feel safe anymore at my own home and in my own front yard. I still occasionally have dreams about the wolves getting out and trying to attack my daughter and in my dream I have to physically fight the wolves to keep them away from my daughter.

The only reason we ended up suing POTH over the death of our dog, was because we wanted an apology for one, false statements that were made on POTH's Facebook and two, an apology to be made to us as one has never been made. To this day we have not received any form of apology from Predators of the Heart or anyone associated with them. On the contrary, the very next day after the incident, POTH publicly announced on social media that there was an escape and that their wolves killed a dog. But they lied and tried to slander us by saying our dog provoked the wolves and thus, the attack. Even though my dog was outside for a whole 10 seconds before he was killed, showing that the 3 wolves were already out of their containment and on our property. But POTH was trying to sway public opinion like they always do, and decided to blame the victims instead of taking accountability for their mistakes.

POTH moved into a previously established residence 20+ years ago, and in my opinion, they need to be somewhere that is isolated and far from people for citizen safety. I am asking you to please make a decision today that allows me to feel safe at my own home again, and get rid of POTH.

Sincerely,  
Matthew Kozera

I am a Welch Lane resident and I am strongly against Predators of the Heart (POTH) acquiring permits to expand their operations.

First off, Welch Lane is a private road, yet with all of the traffic that POTH's Airbnb experience brings, the lane feels very public. Since POTH has failed to post adequate directions to their establishment my driveway has become a turn around for their confused and lost customers. I've had up to four cars a day drive onto my property and sometimes drive all the way down to my lower property in search of POTH. This is very disrupting and takes away from my families peace and privacy. It would be avoidable if POTH had their own private entrance to their property/establishment, but to my knowledge POTH will never be able to do so. Thus, Welch Lane residents would continue to have to share their private lane with the abundance of POTH costumers if the permits go through.

Secondly, POTH has proven over the years they can't provide inescapable cages for their animals. Their wolves, foxes, and macaws have all escaped during my time of living on Welch Lane. I fear one of their cougars will escape next. Will my young son get attacked by a cougar or a wolf when he is out exploring his own property? Every time I am outside on my property I worry about being face to face with an escaped POTH animal, my anxious and worried thoughts have only intensified since having my son. If there had *never* been an animal escape from POTH, than maybe I could keep my mind calm, but the fact that multiple dangerous, nonnative animals have escaped from POTH means I can *never* fully be at ease; As they say, history repeats itself. I also have three dogs who love living on five acres. I have them fenced in most of the time, but I do let them out to run around my property on occasion. I worry if my dogs aren't in their fenced yard, that an escaped wolf will run onto my property and kill one of my dogs like the wolves did to my neighbors dog, Oakley, in fall 2021. When the wolves killed Oakley, it wasn't POTH that called me to warn that the wolves had escaped, my next door neighbor Dave was the one who called and told me to get myself and my dogs inside.

When the macaw escaped, I could hear lots of cawing and commotion coming from my neighbor Dave's driveway. POTH had an off duty firetruck blocking the whole road and didn't really care to explain to me what was going on when I asked. The macaw ended up flying away as soon as someone on the firetruck's ladder approached the bird, POTH went screaming after it. I'm only assuming they eventually recaptured the bird. Though, my life didn't feel threatened by the escaped macaw, it was a frantic, avoidable moment that I experienced while living on Welch Lane. I shouldn't have to worry about these life threatening, hectic encounters. I could rest assured if POTH could keep their animals enclosed, but it seems they can't. Why should they be approved to exist, let alone expand?

Thank you,

Millicent Swietzer



17 August 2023

Mr. Hearing Examiner c/o Alison Caditz  
Perkins Coie LLP  
1201 Third Avenue Site 4000  
Seattle, WA 98101-3099

Capt. Nathan T. Schwarck, M.S.  
PO Box 113  
Anacortes WA, 98221

Subject: Special Use Permit application #PL22-0133

Dear Mr. Hearing Examiner,

I first met Dave Coleburn in the late 90's right as he was transitioning from his aquarium consultation and service business. I was finishing a Master of Biology degree and was looking for employment in the Anacortes area. I had considered purchasing his aquarium consultation and service business and spent some time familiarizing myself with the various accounts and systems he serviced and maintained. During this time, I had also been contracted to build a custom saltwater aquarium at the Welch residence, which was under construction. I had brainstormed with Dave about the best way to set up the system and he had described a unique pump system. Dave was hired to design the pump system for the Welch aquarium and was introduced to Kevin Welch.

Dave and I worked together ordering the parts necessary to build the system and we spent time at his Skyline house fabricating the design. While at his house I was introduced to his backyard of predators and learned more about his vision for Predators of the Heart. I also heard firsthand about the issues involved with holding these animals at his Skyline residence and was told about a recent incident where Dave's juvenile mountain lion had escaped the enclosure and had been running around Washington Park -which was close to the Skyline home. I was also introduced to a retired veterinarian who was working/volunteering with Dave.

I was asked to volunteer my time helping with animal husbandry and came away feeling undervalued and manipulated. I had enjoyed talking with Dave about marine systems but was not looking to volunteer my time. I remember asking several questions about the business model of Predators and came away feeling disenchanting. The emphasis on actively soliciting donations left a sour taste. I felt the business model was in-part based upon manipulating people's emotions and the animals were just a tool to this end. I also felt the talk about "showmanship" i.e., using lasers, video projection, and smoke machines was incongruent with the health and well-being of the animals. This furthered my interpretation that the main focus was being placed on manipulating the audience emotionally over actually educating the viewers about the interesting biology and ecology of the "predators".

Following the completion of the Welch aquarium I took a position in Anacortes at the Shannon Point Marine Center, a facility of Western Washington University. I've spent the last 23 years as part of the science team and feel fortunate to have contributed to the research and education goals of the center. During my time at Shannon Point I have contributed to over 200 scientific papers, many of which have involved conducting research on live organisms. I am familiar with the permitting and oversight process

for the collection, transfer, and maintenance of these organisms and have obtained recognition as a Certified Fisheries Professional. Additionally, I serve as a member of the accreditation team with the American Academy of Underwater Scientists (AAUS). Membership with AAUS is a requirement for zoos and aquariums (that conduct scientific diving) to obtain accreditation with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). I frequently attend conferences and scientific meetings with zoo and aquarium colleagues and have had students go on to work in management and husbandry at these facilities. I have also served on the hiring committee for the SEA Discovery Center the Western Washington University owned aquarium, education, and outreach center in Poulsbo, Washington State.

I have lived in Anacortes since the summer of 1995 and actively spend time in the Anacortes Community Forest Lands (ACFL). I currently serve on the ACFL advisory board and am familiar with the issues involved around managing this amazing resource. I frequently mountain bike, hike, and walk my dogs in the ACFL. I have experienced first-hand the issues surrounding the current location of Predators of the Heart/Because We Matter. Issues of note include the lack of onsite oversight, neglect of consistent husbandry, and excessive noise. I frequently drive-up Welch Lane past the fenced property and enter and exit the forest lands along the West side of the property. It is hard not to feel threatened when transiting the community forest lands and private property surrounding the Predator's enclosure. The history of negative interactions with escaped animals, noise, and being visually stalked by the animals running along the inside of the enclosure is significant. I rarely observe anyone on site and often feel that their reaction to our human presence is the only enrichment these animals have recently received.

As a Biologist, I know outreach and education is an important part of conservation and management. I also believe entertainment using non-domesticated animals has its place; but only when done in accordance with the industry standards as set forth by relevant standard setting organizations, U.S. law and Federal, State, and local requirements. I also feel that Predators/Because We Matter's current business model has not matured beyond its original foundation and am concerned that the current model emphasizing the need for continual donations is unsustainable.

With concerns,



Nathan T. Schwarck

I, Nolan Berlin, resident and owner of 4548 Welch Lane, have become informed that recently Predators of the Heart (POTH) has applied for a special use permit application. I'm writing this letter today to voice my concerns as someone whom lives very close to this operation.

I purchased my home in March of 2015 knowing there were animals (wolves) next door. I didn't really know what awaited. Within the first week of moving in, there was an animal escape, a black fox, not something you would see in the wild around Anacortes. I ran inside not knowing what to expect from a wild animal that has been in captivity for who knows how long. Soon after seeing the fox, I saw four POTH employees wandering the neighborhood looking for the fox. Hours later, the animal was coaxed back into an enclosure. They were unable to catch it by hand which led to herding it back into a fenced area. There was no warning or heads up by the staff to the neighbors, about the escaped fox. A short time later, a dog and its owner walked off the Anacortes Forest Land's trail and onto unfenced boarding property owned by POTH. On this particular day, POTH was taking photos with their wolves and when one of the wolves saw the dog, it immediately attacked and killed the dog in front of the owner. There are thousands of people who use the Anacortes Forest Lands, I feel it is careless to have unpredictable and dangerous animals so close to a public area. In 2019 we were sitting in the living room of our home when a ladder firetruck showed up on the road to our house. They set up the stabilizer jacks and started lifting the ladder. After wondering what all the commotion was, we went outside to discover a loose macaw bird in the tree, squawking away, loud as can be. The attempt to capture the parrot was unsuccessful when approached by a human on the firetruck ladder. The bird eventually flew away closer to the POTH facility, but only after disrupting the whole neighborhood. I believe it was later captured.

In Fall 2021, three wolves dug out under an outdoor, fenced, roaming area. It was about 9:30 AM. Unfortunately the neighbors dog was the target in this situation. The dog was quickly surrounded by three wolves in his front yard and completely shredded within minutes. POTH has lied to the community about the extent of the attacks and said the dog provoked the situation, which I know is not true.

I have a one year old son and plan on having more kids, I'm excited for them to grow up on my property on Welch Lane. Although, the last thing I want to have happen is for a wolf to escape and kill my child. It doesn't need to come to that extent for the place to be shut down. Parents and grandparents shouldn't have to worry about watching their kids or grandkids getting mauled by escaped POTH animals. I also have three sporting dogs. It's sad I have to fence in our dogs on our five acre property for safety concerns of a wolf possibly escaping and attacking one of my dogs.

When POTH teamed up with Airbnb in 2017 more problems started. In one week, I had over a dozen cars driving past my house, down to our lower pasture in search for POTH. After a brief argument with POTH, decent signage was put up, but that didn't seem to help the situation much. We still had, sometimes, up to four cars a day coming to our house at the end of Welch Lane. The traffic the Airbnb experience has brought has been stressful on everyday life for us. Imagine sitting in your hot tub on your deck and watching a car with four people in it from Oregon

scanning your property while the driver is lost looking to turn around in your yard. Unacceptable. This organization needs it's own access off Havekost Road if it is going to continue operations.

Another main concern I have is all of these animals are left unattended every night. No one lives on the 10 acre property with the animals. Since POTH is located in the forest, when high winds come in the winter time, it's only a matter of time before a tree is blown down onto an enclosure and animals begin escaping. In all reality, this is a terrible location for POTH. Everyone I have talked to says they would like to see them relocate to a safer non-residential area.

Please leave open ears for the neighbors on Welch Lane who have had to live next to and deal with consequences from Predators of the Heart.

Thank you,

Nolan Berlin

I am opposed to the Special Use Permit Application #PL22-0133 for POTH. I live on Welch Lane and am impacted by POTH in a negative way. Last fall our neighbors dog was killed and eaten by wolves that had dug out of their enclosure, came onto the neighbor's property and proceeded to attack and kill the family dog. That was just awful and heartbreaking for the family to witness. There are many small children that live out here and we ourselves have 3 young grandchildren. There is a huge concern for their safety and wellbeing. I am apprehensive of being outside of my house by myself and have concerns for my dog being safe also.

Since POTH has been in their current location we have had a rat infestation and have had to have a pest company come out and set traps. We have had a raven problem with them dropping old meat on our property.

There have been other instances when the wolves have escaped their enclosure and come on to neighbor's property, we have also had exotic birds that have gotten out of their enclosure. What we worry about are the wolves and cougars getting out. What is it going to take for POTH to be shut down or relocated, the killing of another dog or a child?

Regards,

Pam Knutsen