



Mikael Roldsgaard Nielsen

Director of Leadership Giving

Mikael Roldsgaard Nielsen serves as director of leadership giving at Mercy For Animals, where he oversees the leadership-giving program and spends his days working with supporters to ensure they are updated on and engaged with the organization's work and mission to construct a compassionate food system by reducing suffering and ending exploitation of animals for food.

Mikael has been active in animal protection since 2002 and a part of Mercy For Animals since 2006. He spent six years as a volunteer and has served for the past 10 as a staffer in various programs, including corporate engagement, volunteer coordination, veg support, and fundraising, excelling in several key positions:

- Director of Public Outreach
- Campaigns Manager, Latin America and Brazil
- Director of Volunteer Outreach
- Global Campaigns Manager
- Global Volunteer Manager
- National Volunteer Coordinator

Mikael describes his vegan journey: "Like most people, I loved animals growing up but never made the connection between the ones in our homes, like our family dog Oscar, and the animals I ate each night for dinner. I never thought that those animals could, like Oscar, experience loneliness, excitement, sadness, and fear. It wasn't until college, when I researched factory

farming for a speech class, that I learned just how bad things were for animals in our food system."

"This was right around Thanksgiving in 1996, and thinking about the millions and millions of turkeys who would suffer and die for this holiday of giving thanks each year was the final straw. I went vegetarian overnight. At the time, I was aware of the horrors in the dairy and egg industries but thought it was too tough to go all the way vegan. After a few years of being vegetarian and thinking about plant-based substitutes for dairy and eggs, my new year's resolution for 1999 was to start off the year vegan. I've never looked back. That was over 23 years ago, and it's still one of the best decisions I have ever made."

Mikael was born in Aarhus, Denmark, moved to the United States when he was 10, and grew up in the Midwest. He attended Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Indiana, double-majored in mathematics and economics, and graduated with honors. After college, he moved to Chicago and in 2002 went to a veg-advocacy conference that was life changing. He left knowing that being vegan was not enough for him and that he had to get active and help educate consumers on where their food came from and encourage them to make more compassionate food choices. Mikael quickly fell in love with veg outreach and over the next four years volunteered for several different groups working in the region.

In 2006 he met Mercy For Animals founder Milo Runkle and was immediately impressed with everything the group was doing, from its messaging and branding to its organization and use of resources. Mikael recalls, "I truly felt that every hour I donated to Mercy For Animals was an hour put to really good use." The rest, as they say, is history.

Today he resides with his partner and her daughter in Tampa, Florida, where he is near his family (and the beach). Outside work, Mikael enjoys snowboarding, hiking, paddleboarding, and camping and tries to practice daily meditation. He is always on board to exchange cute pictures of fur babies, as he also lives with a very photogenic rescued Great Pyrenees named Ralph.

