



## Mikael Roldsgaard Nielsen

Director of Leadership Giving

Mikael Roldsgaard Nielsen serves as director of leadership giving at Mercy For Animals, where he oversees the [Compassion Collective](#) and spends his days working with supporters to ensure they are updated on and engaged with the organization's work to end industrial animal agriculture by constructing a just and sustainable food system. Mikael has been active in animal protection since 2002 and part of Mercy For Animals since 2006. He spent six years as a volunteer and has served for the past 11 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 suffered and died for this holiday 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 going all the way vegan was too tough. After a few years of being vegetarian and thinking about plant-based versions of 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 24 years ago, and it's still one of the best decisions I have ever made."

Mikael was born in Aarhus, Denmark. He 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. Mikael left knowing that being vegan was not enough for him. He had to get active and help educate consumers on where their food came from and encourage them to make more compassionate food choices. He quickly fell in love with veg outreach and over the following 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 organized 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.

