

# KATHY LAMBERT

## King County Councilwoman

With her sincere smile and passion for helping people, it's easy to see why bi-partisan King County Councilwoman Kathy Lambert is so popular. Kathy has been making a difference for families – including animal family members – for two decades. A former school teacher, children's book author, and small business owner, Kathy has advocated for families in King County and beyond for years, earning the Behavioral Science Institute's "Family Advocate of the Year" award in 2000. But as she helped victims of domestic violence, even those who worked closest with her had no idea that she herself was a domestic violence survivor.

Petite, fair-haired, and green-eyed, Kathy discusses her past as she looks toward a bright future for King County and its residents. "Domestic violence can happen in any household," Kathy said. And when it happened to her, she made sure that her family was safe – and then she set out to make sure that other families would be safe, too.

"Years ago, I came to Washington from California because my ex-husband had tried to kill me," Kathy explained. "Back then, there really wasn't protection for domestic violence. I hadn't told anyone ...it's not necessarily what you want people to know."

Kathy's parents have been married for 69 years and she came from a loving home where she was the oldest of four children. The abuse in her marriage was terrifying and disorienting – and she looked for resources on how to protect herself and her young children. "At first, I wondered, 'Why me?'" she recalled. "I was embarrassed. I didn't want to tell my parents. I finally told my pastor and he said, 'Maybe if you bake him better recipes...'"

But silence, "better baking," or hoping that things would get better didn't resolve the issues at home. Kathy didn't want to go to the battered women's shelter with her four young children,

including her two stepchildren. And she refused to leave them with her husband. Finally, someone at work noticed what she was enduring and reached out to her.

"I had a really good boss who finally sat me down one day and said, 'Don't think I don't notice the bruises you try to cover, but I'll wait until you want to talk about it,'" she recalled.

Kathy remembered how those supportive words encouraged her, and when the story of her abuse finally came out, she felt simultaneously empowered and vulnerable. For a decade, she'd raised her stepchildren in addition to her own two children, and she needed to keep them all safe. "There was no way I was giving those children into that situation," she said. "Then, the judge asked me if I would raise the stepchildren – the judge was a little bit surprised when I said yes. But by the time you've raised someone for ten years, they're yours."

In the years since she came to the evergreen state, Kathy has been a schoolteacher and a children's book author – and for two decades, she has been advocating for families, including our animal family members. Kathy, who is a nonpartisan member of the King County Council, began her public service career in 1995. No one – including those who worked closely with her – knew about the domestic violence that she and her family had survived, until she championed legislation to protect other domestic violence survivors.

"In the legislature, no one knew that I was a survivor or that I'd helped run a rehab program," she said. "Suzette Cook, who's now the Mayor of Kent, was the Chair of the Children and Family Services Committee and I was Vice Chair. She wanted me to rewrite the domestic violence and meth bills. At first, advocates hated my bills, but I wanted to give people the tools to survive."

Kathy is particularly proud of a prescription discount plan called "Live Healthy" that was just implemented in King County. For four years, Kathy had championed the program, which would provide discounted prescriptions for King County families – including their animal family members. This year, that



program finally came to King County – the 13th largest county in the US and the largest to participate in the program. Live Healthy will be available at 375 King County pharmacies and applies to prescriptions that would treat conditions in both humans and in their pets.

"The new program provides an average of 24% off retail prescription prices; in our state, it's 29%," Kathy said. As much as this program will save people money on their prescriptions for themselves and for their pets, Kathy is already looking ahead. "Next, I'd like to get dental care covered for people and for animals."

It's easy to enroll in the program; just go to [Nacorx.org/print-a-card/download](http://Nacorx.org/print-a-card/download).

Kathy's lifelong inspiration is her dad, Andrew Kristensen. "He was a captain in the San Francisco Police Department for more than 30 years," she said. "He's 93 now and he worked in the Boise Police Department up until he was 92. He's a teacher's assistant two days a week now and when he goes out to dinner, kids are always coming out and hugging him. A lot of the criminal justice legislation that we do is based upon things that he did."

Captain Kristensen taught Kathy that public service isn't about power, but about people.

"Because of him, I saw that the laws made a difference," she recalled. "Once, back when he was a sergeant, he found a baby; there was no place for him, so he literally drove around in the patrol car with the baby. He tried to adopt him, but it didn't work. He was on the cutting edge of community policing. People would call him 'Sarge' or Andy. He actually guarded MLK, who told him that it was the first time he'd been guarded by a white man," Kathy said.

"But my dad was so humble...he didn't tell me about that until after I'd written a book about MLK."

Her father remains a trusted advocate for her to this day. "Sometimes I call my dad and say, 'What do you think about this?'" she said.

Kathy is proud to be a non-partisan representative. "We should be focusing on the problems and the solutions, not focusing on the angle," she said. "It's important to make a law that all of the people have agreed upon. I like problem solving and love to hear from as many viewpoints as possible. It's important to let people know that their input is valued and that we're listening. Anyone can come and be treated with respect and know that I'll listen to them and try to get them answers."

Kathy is a lifelong animal lover who has had many dogs in her family: Skip the naughty Beagle, Laddy the biter, and Tiger the Chihuahua who thought he was a Doberman because he'd been raised with two Dobermans.

"Tiger was my favorite," she recalled. "I'd just stick her in my coat and take her with me. Her head would be sticking out the top, and people would say, 'Interesting necklace...' and I'd have to tell them, 'No, that's my dog's head...' I should've called her 'Necklace!'"

Kathy's current dog is Flynn, a large, lovable golden retriever.

Kathy continues to be proud of the programs that she has supported, including one called FIRS (Family Intervention Resource Services.) "We've been working a lot on juvenile justice and making sure that kids get services as quickly as possible," she said. "By current law, you have to arrest someone when there's a domestic violence situation. If it's a youth, we help them with a housing situation that looks a lot like a frat or a sorority. It has murals, bedspreads, pillows, a couch, and a rug. We make a contract with the parents and then when the parents are ready, the kids go home and the counseling continues. Then the child doesn't have a juvenile record," she said.

King County has some of the lowest youth incarceration rates in the county. "We've reduced the domestic violence arrest rate by 60%. We currently have 31 children in our detention center, which has an excellent school that supports them a lot. Being a prior teacher, I'm really interested in what goes on there. We work really hard to not put children in detention,

but some of them are in there for first degree murder and you don't want them to be out walking the streets."

Kathy represents the third district,

which includes almost half of King County, including Issaquah, North Bend, Fall City, Sammamish, Preston, Carnation, Redmond, Duvall, Skykomish, and part of Woodinville.

Kathy's recent awards include United Way of King County's Outstanding Public Official of the Year (2013), King County's Technology Champion Award (2013), and Zonta Club of East King County's International Rose Day Award (2013) for advancing the status of women and focusing on domestic violence. Kathy's work also includes changes to waste management, including upcycling, energy, and recycling, pilot projects on youth and young adults impacted by trauma, the bridges and roads task force, and the King County Noise Code.



To learn more about Kathy, visit her website at [www.kingcounty.gov/council/lambert.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/council/lambert.aspx).