

The Ark at JFK Airport

The ARK at JFK is committed to the safe and humane treatment of all animals traveling by air and setting the gold standard in animal handling and transportation

By Metropolitan Airport News (metroairportnews.com/the-ark-at-jfk-airport/)

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When most people think of The Ark, they think of the biblical story of Noah protecting the animals on the ark he built. At JFK International Airport, there really is an ark!

The ARK at JFK, located in Building 78A, is an animal reception and handling terminal dedicated to the safe passage of all creatures, great and small. They have been serving the JFK community since 2017 with 24/7 direct access to

the airside, ensuring the smooth transition for all animals arriving and departing at JFK airport.

To provide such a critical service, ARK works very closely with its federal and local partners at the USDA, CDC, USFWS, CBP, and the PANYNJ. There are many moving parts with passenger travel, and animal travel is definitely more complicated. Horses and other animals arriving from foreign countries must quarantine. When they arrive at The ARK, they get a world-class reception and rest in state-of-the-art accommodations developed for their specific needs.

The ARK has recently completed its IATA CEIV certification after going through an exhaustive application and auditing process to ensure they provide best-in-class services to the animals they are handling. They have USDA-accredited veterinarians onsite to provide travel certifications and assist with any animals and pets that may need support. The facility also provides support and accommodations for working animals at JFK Airport with the Transportation Security Administration and U.S. Customs and Border Protection K-9 teams.

ARK's divisions work together to deliver the best experience for the animals, Pet Parents, stakeholders, airlines and staff: Pet Oasis, Equine Export, Equine Import, and the Aviary/In-Transit

John J. Cuticelli, Jr., Founder and Chairman, created the vision, designed, developed, and built the entire facility, including Building 78B which houses Worldwide Flight Services ("WFS") cargo operations. **Elizabeth A. Schuette**, President and CEO, played a crucial role in formulating staffing and operational plans for The ARK at JFK during its development. In her present role, she oversees all aspects of The ARK's day-to-day operations as well as Marketing, Public Relations Finance, interactions with regulatory stakeholders, and involvement with industry trade groups.



Chris Lapkowski(L.-Right): Mike Falacara, COO; Alyssa Burke., Director of Operations; Elizabeth Schuette, President and CEO; Kiera Mejia, Director of Sales & Marketing; Chris Lapkowski, Customer Experience Manager

A talented team supports Ms. Schuette in the facility's operations. **Mike Falacara**, COO, joined the team in 2020 with more than 30-years of experience and knowledge in operations, ground handling, and cargo at JFK airport.

Kiera Mejia has been at The ARK since it opened. She started as an equine attendant taking care of the thousands of horses that come through the doors each year. Ms. Mejia was recently promoted to Director of Sales and Marketing. She manages the Pet Shipping

team, updates social media outlets, manages The ARK and ARK Pet Oasis websites, and searches for outreach opportunities and content marketing.

Kiera is the focus of this month's *Fast Five* interview found on page 5.

ARK's Director of Operations and Logistics is **Alyssa Burke**. Ms. Burke is responsible for the daily operations at The ARK; from overseeing the completion of the daily equine import and export operations, coordinating all ground movement, and ensuring compliance with the rules and regulations for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, U.S. Customs Border and Protection, and all Federal partners. Alyssa comes to The ARK with several years of Human Resource and business administration experience from one of JFK's largest ground handling companies.

Pet Parents need assistance planning travel for their beloved companion animals. That's where **Chris Lapkowski** comes in. Chris started as an animal attendant and has worked his way up to Customer Experience Manager. Things can get complicated with regulations, certifications, scheduling, international policies, quarantines, airlines, and compliance with the federal partners. Pet Parents can rest easy knowing that Chris has them covered during a potentially stressful time.

Sara Ovadia is the Supervisory Animal Attendant at the ARK Pet Oasis. She takes care of Fluffy and Fido as if they were her own. Her love of animals started at a young age through her volunteerism at local animal shelters and her dog walking and pet sitting business in high school. Sara is the perfect compassionate leader to ensure the animals traveling through JFK are safe and stress-free.

So when you consider The Ark in biblical terms, it is certainly a nod to what is happening at The ARK at JFK.

If you have any questions about traveling with your pet or having your pet travel alone, contact them at info@arkjfk.com, or visit them online at www.arkjfk.com, they are standing by to deliver you and your pet a fantastic experience.

The Ark at JFK

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