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America Inspired finalist Cari Meyers: What motivates her to lead this cause



Kathy Mordini

Chicago Pets Examiner



(<http://www.examiner.com/pets-in-chicago/cari-meyers-photo-2>)

Cari Meyers and volunteers from the Puppy Mill Project often work at booths at community events to get the word out about pet stores and puppy mills.

Credits: The Puppy Mill Project

Cari Meyers is a finalist in the Leadership division for the America Inspired contest. See the original story and vote for Cari [here](http://www.examiner.com/pets-in-chicago/cari-meyers-building-community-awareness-about-puppy-mills?cid=PROG-ExaminerArticle-AIHub-Leadership-Box5-Meyers) ([./././pets-in-chicago/cari-meyers-building-community-awareness-about-puppy-mills?cid=PROG-ExaminerArticle-AIHub-Leadership-Box5-Meyers](http://www.examiner.com/pets-in-chicago/cari-meyers-building-community-awareness-about-puppy-mills?cid=PROG-ExaminerArticle-AIHub-Leadership-Box5-Meyers)).

On the first bitter cold night of a Chicago winter, the plight of the animals in puppy mills really hits home for Cari Meyers. While she curls up in her home with her own dogs, she focuses on the thousands of dogs living in cages or non-insulated sheds in the Midwestern puppy mills. The obstacles ahead are a bit overwhelming.

Dealing with challenges

"I think so much about the dogs today. It's not just that they are out freezing in the cold and wind, but the fact that so many people – the puppy millers – could be so overtly cruel for so long to defenseless animals," say Meyers, founder of [the Puppy Mill Project](http://www.thepupppymillproject.org/) (<http://www.thepupppymillproject.org/>).

"It's just too much. I step back and focus on the small victories we've accomplished since we started getting the word out in Chicago. We've closed down pet stores and developed relationships with the rescues working with the survivors of the mills. When I see the look in the eyes of dogs first rescued and then the look when they finally find a good home, it makes it all worthwhile."



By Kathy Mordini
Chicago Pets
Examiner

Kathy Mordini is a public relations specialist and former journalist. She is passionate about educating the public on pet adoption, pet rescue and...

When Meyers first founded the organization two years ago, no one in the Chicago area was focusing on puppy mills even though the Chicago market was and still is a huge sales market for puppy mill dogs. She started chipping away one protest at a time, connecting with animal lovers who – like Meyers – knew the dirty little secret pet stores were hiding and wanted to make a difference.

Making a difference

“There are so many wonderful, trusting people out there that want to add a dog to their family and they make the mistake of trusting the local pet store or Internet,” says Meyers. “The pet store owner says the dogs are pure breeds and come from great breeding stock and the average consumer has no reason to doubt that. The biggest difference we can make is to educate everyone so they know how to ask the right questions and where to find the right answers. They don’t need to trust the word of someone trying to sell them a commodity. Every time I see a dog from a puppy mill and see the cruelty that is legally going on in this country it inspires me to keep going.”

Community education

Meyers is currently in the running for the America Inspired contest that has a \$50,000 grand prize for the winner. As a grassroots organization, the Puppy Mill Project has made its mark and gotten the word out working with virtually no budget. If Meyers wins the America Inspired contest, she would use the funds for education – from creating programs for schools to teach children about puppy mills to spending money on advertising on buses and trains to get the message in front of Chicagoans every day.

Her advice

“The more we get out and educate, the more I hear people say – ‘I had a bad feeling about that pet store or Internet seller.’ My advice is to go with your gut. If it doesn’t feel right, do your homework, ask your questions and don’t assume anyone else will figure it out for you,” says Meyers. “If you see an injustice or you think something is wrong, you should speak out. You have a moral obligation to do so.”

Her inspiration

The more Meyers works to get the word out, the more she is inspired by the people in the trenches every day. Through her work, she has connected with the many breed rescues in Chicago that routinely rescue, rehabilitate and rehome the surviving dogs from puppy mills.

"I went to the National Mill Dog Rescue in Colorado after Thanksgiving and was amazed at what this organization does," says Meyers. "They are on the road driving around the country rescuing dogs from puppy mills. So far, they've rescued over 5,800 dogs and they just keep rescuing more and more. Every volunteer there has such a passion for what they do, it inspired me even more to keep doing what I do."

Getting involved

She encourages people to get involved by going to protests, volunteering at events or donating to help them develop more education programs. To learn more about the Puppy Mill Project, go online

(<http://www.thepuppymillproject.org/page/page/8151946.htm>)

for information about volunteering

(<http://www.thepuppymillproject.org/volunteer.html>), the

Illinois Pet Shop Disclosure Act

(http://www.thepuppymillproject.org/know_the_law.html),

where pet stores purchase their puppies

(http://www.thepuppymillproject.org/il_ide.html) and where to

find a dog

(http://www.thepuppymillproject.org/help_me_find_a_dog.html)

. You may also follow them on Facebook

(<https://www.facebook.com/thepuppymillproject?ref=ts>) .

Vote for Cari in the America Inspired contest

Learn more about Cari by reading the article

(<http://www.examiner.com/pets-in-chicago/cari-meyers-building-community-awareness-about-puppy-mills>) about her that

propelled her to the finals of America Inspired. Then register

and vote (<http://www.examiner.com/pets-in-chicago/cari-meyers-building-community-awareness-about-puppy-mills>)

every day through the 27th to help in the battle against puppy mills.

Do you volunteer or work for a shelter or rescue that has programs you'd like to promote? Do you work in a pet-related business that has an interesting story to tell. If so, contact me at kathypetexam@gmail.com (<mailto:kathypetexam@gmail.com>). Enjoy this article? Receive email alerts when new articles become available. Just click on the subscribe button above. You may also follow me on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/#%21/KathyMordini) (<https://twitter.com/#%21/KathyMordini>), [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Raining-Cats-Dogs/252266268128374) (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Raining-Cats-Dogs/252266268128374>) or read my [blog](http://rainingcatanddogs.wordpress.com/) (<http://rainingcatanddogs.wordpress.com/>).