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NEWS

MADONNA OF THE MILLS

April 23, 2011, 11:59AM MT
By Rudy Linke, Best Friends Network volunteer

Exclusive Chicago screening of an important puppy mill documentary and a fund raising event for The Puppy Mill Project

Cari Meyers, at 3 years old, knew the importance of animals. She remembers the ache of helplessness and recalls wiping away tears whenever she saw a homeless pet. "You can't save them all," her mother had told her, saying what any parent would say to spare her child from the realities of the world. But Cari could not accept her mom's version of reality and ever since has dedicated her life to helping animals in any way she could.

Later she turned her determination to eradicating puppy mills when, after researching the subject for months, her resolve quickened in an moment she'll never forget. "I walked out of a meeting with the rescue I worked with and that lightning bolt hit me. No one was addressing the puppy mill issue. We had to cut the monster off at its head. I knew then that the puppy mill dogs were going to be my focus."

With the determination and vision of that moment, Cari labored on and founded [The Puppy Mill Project](#), a group dedicated to educating people about puppy mills and their connection to pet shops.

And on May 7th, the day before Mothers' Day, The Puppy Mill Project is hosting its first fundraiser. Cari believes that scheduling the fundraiser on the day before Mothers' Day is appropriate since the event will present the Chicago premier screening of "[Madonna of the Mills](#)," a documentary about Laura, a woman who travels through Pennsylvania's puppy mills to rescue aging breeder dogs.

Four hundred invitations swept out to rescues and shelters in Illinois for this event.

"This is a very significant film that exposes the cruel, secret world of puppy mills," Cari says. "The average person has no idea what a puppy mill is and could never begin to dream of the cruelty that goes on in these places. Exposing the truth about where pet store puppies really come from will open the eyes of millions of people who are considering buying a dog from a pet store. When you see these brave, courageous, and forgiving dogs becoming family members and finding love, it will change you forever."



This fundraiser represents the first time the documentary has been screened outside of New York. "I read about 'Madonna of the Mills' and was so happy that someone was making an uplifting documentary that viewers were able to watch without having to close their eyes to the gruesome images, that I contacted one of the film's producers about showing it in Chicago at our fundraiser," explained Cari. "I explained what our organization does, and hopes to do, in the future, and they were gracious enough to agree."

Cari will use the funds from the event to carry out the important work of The Puppy Mill Project. "All of the funds we collect at our event will go directly to raising awareness and educating the public about the pet stores, internet sites and newspaper ads, and their direct connection to puppy mills. We are beginning several large-scale advertising campaigns that will be expensive but will reach consumers on a very large scale." As for the documentary, HBO has purchased the rights, ensuring even greater exposure of this important film.

When Cari and her team of volunteers are not planning for a fundraiser, they spend many weekends in peaceful protests outside pet shops that sell animals. They can be found outside these shops even in the middle of Chicago's deep-freeze winters, their passion fueling them from within. "People need to know that protests work and we have helped close down several stores already," Cari explains. "There are so many ways to get involved with us, from donating, to protesting, to helping us back pro-animal legislation. We will always find a place for anyone that wants to become involved with our mission." Their activities are not limited to protests; they also go into schools and communities to educate the public about puppy mills. To find out more, visit their [website](#).

If you'd like to help Cari and The Puppy Mill Project, a great way to start is to attend the fund raising event. This special evening includes dinner, dancing, a silent auction, the chance to mingle with others who feel strongly about putting an end to puppy mills, and, of course, the opportunity to see the documentary.

What: Madonna of the Mills screening, dinner and fund raiser
When: Saturday, May 7, 2011. Doors open at 6:15 p.m. and the event kicks off at 7:00 p.m.
Where: Chicago Party Animals, 1133 W. Fulton, Chicago
Cost: \$65 individual or \$100 for two (\$75 each at door)
Purchase tickets by [clicking here](#)

- Read about Best Friends' [puppy mill initiatives](#) and learn about building awareness about inhumane conditions in puppy mills, encouraging people to adopt rather than buy pets and advocating for better legislation to combat puppy mills.

Image courtesy of The Puppy Mill Project