



# Puppies Aren't Products

exposing the puppy mill / pet store connection and encouraging adoption



## NEWS

### THE PUPPY MILL PROJECT TAKES ACTION IN CHICAGO

October 19, 2010, 8:3AM MT

By Arianna Pittman, Best Friends Network volunteer

Advocacy group is spreading awareness about puppy mills and making changes in Illinois.

Cari Meyers remembers the exact moment that the idea for The Puppy Mill Project came into her mind. She has worked in animal rescue for a number of years, and one day as she was leaving a meeting at her local no-kill shelter she realized that one important issue was not getting the special attention that is needed; the issue of puppy mills.

In September of 2009, with a heart full of passion and a determined mind, Meyers formed **The Puppy Mill Project**, an organization whose mission is to help educate people and legislators in the community about the commercial breeding industry and its direct link to the sale of puppies in pet stores, newspaper ads and online.

"We have to get to the source of the problem," says Meyers. "There are more advocates than breeders ... a grassroots organization can make a huge difference."



Meyers, along with her staff and volunteers, started to research area pet stores to investigate the conditions in which the animals are kept and find out where they purchase their puppies from. The first store that they had ever protested was a Pawsh Puppies store located in the trendy Lincoln Park area of Chicago, Illinois. They held weekly demonstrations outside the store and handed out educational pamphlets in hopes of deterring people from shopping there. They want people to know that even the purchase of pet supplies or grooming services from stores that sell puppies supports an inhumane industry.

Their efforts finally paid off and in time, the store owner was evicted and the store closed. Not too long after the store closing, they discovered that the owner had decided to open a **Planet Pooch** pet store in the nearby Glenwood, Illinois, area. They made sure that the owner knew that they were aware of his intentions to open a new store and through continued efforts and working the Glendale Planning Commission, they were able to help get the proposed opening of the store voted down 4-1 by local commissioners. The shutdown of one pet store and preventing the opening of another was an inspiring success for the group, but they knew that this was only the beginning. The Chicago area is full of pet stores, so they continue their efforts by researching stores and holding weekly protests.

The Puppy Mill Project has also become heavily involved in the support of legislation that focuses on the commercial breeding industry and sets higher standards for the way in which animals are treated and the conditions in which they live. They were present alongside Illinois Governor Quinn for the signing of **HB 5772**, which is also known as the Pet Store Disclosure Bill. Meyers and her group work closely with local legislators and encourage others to do the same by writing, sending e-mails and making calls to ask them to address animal welfare issues in their district or state. In an effort to dig even deeper into legislative efforts, Meyers is currently working on a conference that would bring together all of the top puppy mill advocacy leaders from around the country to start a national campaign against puppy mills.



With so many existing laws utilizing the USDA to lead the inspections of commercial breeding facilities, one of the other projects in the works is the effort to urge the USDA to place companion animals and farm animals on separate platforms to ensure that the proper guidelines are set for the conditions at breeding facilities. She hopes the efforts will lead her to Washington D.C., where she can speak directly with the USDA about these much needed changes. "We demand that there is going to be some sort of separation between farm animals and companion animals," says Meyers.

The Puppy Mill Project is also working hard with local groups to make Chicago a city that does not allow the sale of puppies and kittens. Staff and volunteers recently made/sent over 900 calls and e-mails to stop two **puppy expos** from coming into Illinois.

Over the past year, The Puppy Mill Project has made its presence known in the Chicago area. Through weekly protests at local pet stores, booths at community events, ads of the back of CTA buses in Chicago, public education and participation in legislative initiatives, and countless hours put in by the entire team, they are making great changes and opening the eyes of many people to the plight of animals living in commercial breeding situations.



The Puppy Mill Project has faced challenges and has even received threats from breeders who they are trying to expose, but Meyers, her staff and volunteers are not fazed by this and continue to fight against puppy mills and work to bring humane legislation and education into the public eye.

"You might as well leave a footprint to show that you have done something," says Meyers, "Failure is not an option; we have to persevere."

**How you can get involved with The Puppy Mill Project:**

- The Puppy Mill Project is always in need of volunteers and has several committees that people can serve on. For more information on volunteering for The Puppy Mill Project, please fill out their [online volunteer information form](#).
- While they try to encourage adoption and eliminate the mentality that you are "saving" a dog when you purchase it from a pet store, The Puppy Mill Project urges people to check out their local pet stores and not be afraid to **ask questions** and request documentation showing where their puppies come from. In order to aid in this effort, Meyers and her staff are currently working on the concept of a website where people can look up a particular pet store and see where the store gets their puppies from and therefore look up the breeder to see what violations they may have. They want to inform the public of the truth behind pet stores and help them to understand the direct connection between pet stores and puppy mills.

**How you can help put an end to puppy mills:**

- You too can take action and [organize a peaceful pet store demonstration](#).
- Join [Voices for No More Homeless Pets](#) and for updates on animal issues important to you!
- Become a fan of the [Puppies Aren't Products](#) campaign and stay informed on what is going on in your area regarding puppy mill legislation.
- Take the [Pledge to Adopt](#), and encourage your friends and family to do the same. Each animal adopted is a life saved.

*Photos courtesy of Tina Vandembroucke of [The Puppy Mill Project](#) and Gary Kalpakoff*



[ShareThis](#)

**[Login to Post a Comment](#)**

Best Friends text message alerts are available on most carriers. Msg&Data Rates May Apply. Reply HELP for help. Stop to cancel. For more information and full terms visit [mGive.com/e](#)

© 2010 Best Friends. All rights reserved. | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#)