



## Consumer education-The Puppy Mill Project launches Pets aren't Presents campaign

Chia had been a breeding dog in a puppy mill prior to her rescue. She stopped by the booth for the Puppy Mill Project at a pet expo to show her support for their efforts.

**Credits:** The Puppy Mill Project

The holiday season is right around the corner and that is a cause for concern for the Chicago organization building awareness about puppy mills. The months leading up to Christmas are a busy season for puppy mills as they crank out puppies by the thousands in time to fill children's holiday wish lists.

### Puppies aren't presents

"We want people to realize that puppies are not presents," says Cari Meyers, founder of The Puppy Mill Project. "Too many people head out to the local pet store or go on the Internet and purchase a puppy without doing their homework and we'd like to change that. It is disheartening that over 70-percent of the U.S. population doesn't know what a puppy mill is.

"It's even more heartbreaking to think of the large number of children who receive a puppy as a present and so many of the puppies are either sick or just too young to be away from their mothers. Meanwhile, the mother left behind in the mill has a life sentence behind bars."

As the holidays approach, Meyers and her organization will be reaching out to the media and will be expanding community outreach to educate consumers. They are raising funds for a billboard on the Kennedy that shows a cute, cuddly puppy on the left and a mom dog in deplorable puppy mill conditions on the right. The organization has set up a fundraising account to support that effort.

Statistics from the Mill Dog Rescue

99% of dogs sold in pet stores come from puppy mills

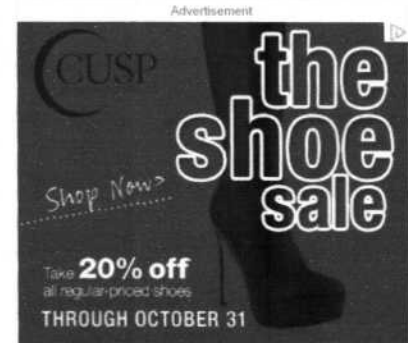
100% of dogs sold in puppy stores have parasites

The majority of the dogs sold in pet stores are sick or incubating an illness

4.5 million puppies are sold from puppy mills each year

Approximately 1 million breeder dogs are confined to puppy mills as we speak

According to the Humane Society of the United States, eight million animals were abandoned and an estimated four million dogs and cats were euthanized last year in the U.S.



### Fighting consumer fraud

"What most people don't understand is that the pet stores selling dogs from puppy mills are committing consumer fraud," adds Meyers. "If you ask people in the pet store where the dogs come from, they will tell you they personally know the breeders and that the dogs are healthy. Pet stores are required by Illinois law to post on or near the cages where they obtain their puppies. The shelter and rescues are posting the information, but most pet stores are not in compliance. The pet stores know when they buy the dogs where they are coming from unless they are getting the dog from a broker who buys from the puppy mills."

If you go to the website for Meyers' organization, you can scroll down the list of all the pet shops in Illinois to see the list of the puppy mills where they obtain their dogs. Because the dogs are bred under inhumane conditions and the parents don't have proper diet or veterinary care, most of the puppies are sick. Most are also too young to have been removed from their mother.

"The really good, legitimate breeders show their dogs and take pride in what they do. They are very picky about who they sell their dogs too and all people go through a thorough process before getting a dog from a good breeder," says Meyers. "Pet stores not only don't screen consumers, they sell on credit with no credit check to anyone who is interested. If the store or Internet site says the breeder is USDA certified, that means a commercial breeding facility – AKA a factory farm or puppy mill."

### Educating Consumers

Volunteers for The Puppy Mill Project have been all over the Chicago-area building awareness. They have protested outside several pet stores in Chicago – helping close the doors for Planet Pooch in Northbrook Court, Pawsh Pups in Lincoln Park, Man's Best Friend in Gurnee Mills and Puppy Palace in Buffalo Grove. The organization's efforts also helped kill Pawsh Pups' expansion plans for the Glen, Schaumburg, Orland Park and Naperville.

They currently protest outside Puppies R Us at 3404 North Ashland from 1 to 3 pm each Saturday. A West Suburban Chapter of The Puppy Mill Project is now tackling setting up protests and building community awareness in Naperville. That community is home to four pet stores that sell dogs from puppy mills - PetLand, Furry Babies, Happiness is Pets and the Dog Patch.

Although their protests have created results, building awareness for the organization goes far beyond protesting. They've set up informational booths at the many Chicago-area pet expos to educate animal lovers about the horrors of puppy mills and the pet stores and Internet sites that sell those dogs. They've participated in events for breed rescues, talked to scouting organizations and met with students at the University of Illinois.

"I see changes on a daily basis as more and more people jump on board supporting our organization and staging their own protests," says Meyers. "We're working hard to build awareness and shutdown stores in the Chicago-area. However, no one is running interference or regulating Internet pet sales – it's truly the Wild West when it comes to pet sales."

She points out that there are many shelters and rescues, even breed specific rescues, which have many puppies and adult dogs looking for a home. All of these dogs should be spayed or neutered and had shots prior to adoption. She suggests doing your homework on rescue organizations as well to make sure that they have properly cared for an animal prior to adoption.

Learn more about The Puppy Mill Project online or follow them on Facebook.

*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](#), [Facebook](#) or [read my blog](#).*

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