



Steve Dale's Pet World

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Puppy Mill Project Protest

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By Steve Dale, today at 11:17 am



By guest blogger Jill Cahr, [Trio Animal Foundation](#)

Like anyone who pays close attention to animal welfare, I know that puppy mills are bad, very bad. However, the more I talk to people, the more I'm shocked by how many good people, people who should know better, have no idea what a puppy mill is, let alone why buying from a pet store is bad, very bad.

I've come to realize that unless you're a crazy-obsessive animal welfare person like me, most people have only a small attention span for animal issues. As a result, most people pay attention to the larger issues, such pet adoption or spay/neuter. When it comes to other, although just as relevant and critical, issues like puppy mills, the audience decreases exponentially. Broad stroke campaigns aimed to educate the public about the horrors of puppy mills are failing to reach people. So, what is the most effective way raise public awareness about puppy mills?

Grass roots organizations that educate at the point of purchase and in the local community are succeeding. These groups are talking to people when

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they are most likely to be interested—as they are walking by or about to enter a pet store.

So, when I saw on Facebook that [The Puppy Mill Project](#) was holding a protest at a pet store in my neighborhood, I decided to participate.

On Saturday, August 6th, I walked over to Puppies R Us, aka Puppies For Us aka Puppies (backwards) R Us. A dozen dedicated people joined me. The Puppy Mill Project provided signs, brochures and the protesters provided enthusiasm and passion.

The first thing I noted at the scene was the “Pit Bills” for sale sign in the store window. Not only is this store selling puppy mill dogs, they are selling and likely breeding Pit Bulls (or whatever they are calling Pit Bulls). You don’t have to be an animal welfare expert to know that shelters are teeming with Pit Bull-type dogs. That sign along with the designer breed names (Cava Poo, Teddy Bear, Morkie, etc.) plastered on the window told me all I needed to know and I was glad I decided to spend a few hours helping The Puppy Mill Project.

Before I held up a sign, I knew that this protest would be a success. It is direct action at the grass roots level that makes a difference fighting against puppy mills. This is what The Puppy Mill Project all about: educating people one at a time. It also didn’t hurt that the store put up a “closed today” sign and shut its shades as soon as we showed up. To me, the fact that the store owners chose to hide behind closed doors, demonstrates the character of the people involved in the dark world of puppy mills.

We all grabbed our placards and began our mission. Neighborhood folks walked by and almost unanimously gave us their support. They shared their sadness and distress that the store is located near their homes and wanted to know how to help.

Hundreds of cars driving by honked and waved in support. Interestingly, the five potential customers that came to the store during our protest were not from the neighborhood and had driven many miles. Not one of the shoppers, many arriving with young children, had any idea where the dogs for sale had come from. All, however, were upset and I believe most will reconsider where they acquire their dog.

I had never participated in a protest before. I am proud to report that standing up for what I believe in was energizing and fun, yes fun! As one person, I made a direct difference in the fight against puppy mills, while spending the afternoon with a group of interesting, pleasant people. Moreover, I gained a new appreciation for the freedoms I have as an American, worldwide embarrassment from the debt crisis be damned. Spending the afternoon exercising my First Amendment right to freely speak my political views is way cool! The Founding Fathers knew what they were doing.

My fellow protesters shared my enthusiasm. Tina Smith attended the protest to “draw awareness that puppy mills exist and to show the

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connection between puppy mills and pet shops." Holly Dain agreed and said she was protesting to "help stop the cycle of puppy mills."

Maureen Carlson drove from the far south suburbs with her daughter. Maureen, who volunteers at a shelter where many pet store purchases end up notes, "I see first hand dogs being euthanized because people buy a dog and have no idea what they are getting into. The puppy mill dogs are often sick and the stores that sell them do not educate the purchaser about veterinary care or grooming or the costs and responsibilities of owning a dog."

Janie Jenkins protests because she believes, "Pet stores lie about the origins of their dogs, so we educate people about the truth." She adds, "How can you put a dollar sign on a heart break?" Julie Howard explained, "Educating the public is important. If people know what a puppy mill is, I believe they'd want to put them out of business. It is not just about one pet shop, it's about raising public awareness so we can put all the shops and puppy mills out of business."

Thanks to the dedication of groups like The Puppy Mill Project, that is happening, one consumer and one protest at a time. According to PMP founder Cari Meyers, "Protests make a big difference. We've closed stores down and stopped people from buying at pet stores." She added that community based education and protests, are the most effective way to make a direct difference in the lives of the animals because people learn the truth about puppy mills and why purchasing at pet stores and on the Internet is bad.

The Puppy Mill Project holds regular protests at pet stores and offers community outreach and education programs. Check out the [The Puppy Mill Project's website](#) for information on protests, volunteer opportunities, pet stores and legislation. In addition, I recommend spending a few hours protesting and making a difference for the animals suffering in the mills and stores. I think you'll be pleased and proud that you did.

Puppies R Us is located in the 32nd ward. Call the [Alderman Scott Waguespack](#) at (773) 248-1330 or email him at info@ward32.org. Let him know what you think of Puppies R Us, pet stores and puppy mills. He has an adopted Pit Bull, so he's likely be interested to hear what this store is doing with Pit Bulls.

Jill Cahr is the Vice President of the [Trio Animal Foundation](#), a charitable organization that pays for medical care for homeless pets. Since it began in 2009, TAF has helped close to 1000 animals, including many puppy mill survivors.



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