

Criminal Justice Class Goes To The Dogs

By Michele Reeves

In August 2008, I met with a Criminal Justice Instructor at a local high school to entertain my request to deliver a presentation to the students regarding the purchase of dogs through local rescue groups, dog pounds, puppy mills and reputable breeders; and the effects of those purchases within the breed as well as the criminal justice system.

My thought process was in frenzy. I researched and gathered statistical information, case law, current animal abuse cases, legal terminology and appalling animal abuse photos of neglect and confiscated mill dogs.

Once I had compiled the information, I needed to create a lesson plan. There were six (6) objectives that the students would meet during this presentation: Define Puppy Mill, Define Back Yard Breeder, Define Rescue, Define Reputable Breeder, Define Animal Abuse, Define Volunteerism.

The instructor was eager to review my power point presentation and granted his approval. Subsequently, the school administration completed their analysis and I was ultimately granted approval. I experienced mixed emotions of excitement and trepidation.

On October 7, 2008, I conducted my seminar presentation. The majority of the students could not identify nor define any of the objectives. I questioned the students if they have seen dogs in retail pet stores. Each student had. There were smiles on their faces envisioning the cute, fluffy puppies behind the glass.

From there, graphic photos of dogs removed from puppy mills were displayed. There were students that turned their head and could no longer see the destruction to the animals; there were students that cried and above all, the entire class was in shock.

Discussion was held regarding several of those puppy mill dogs being placed into rescue and their successful adoptions and integration into a "real" family. Rescue information was provided to the students regarding home visits, canine exams, transportation and applications for adoptions. Photos of successful adoptions were shared which brought smiles and tears to the class.

I asked the students if they could remember how much those cute, fuzzy puppies were on sale for. The majority of students knew the dogs were marketed at thousands of dollars. I shared with the students' actual order forms submitted to a Puppy Broker, as well as the price list for those puppies. The students' were in awe of the price differential between the vendor and the public; literally with hundreds of dollars in mark-up. The class was in disbelief.

The term Back Yard Breeder was defined based on the Wikipedia definition. Photos were shared of an adorable young puppy that had to be humanly euthanized due to lack of genetic health testing on the parents, as well as the lack of breeding knowledge from "the breeder." The puppy suffered from slipped patellas, a fractured leg, tremors, seizures and hydrocephalus. The students were informed that the Back Yard Breeder did not take this action; someone else had to make this decision based on the needs of the puppy.

The students were questioned on animal abuse and what they considered abuse. By the end of the presentation, the students were able to identify Passive Acts of Omission as well as Active Acts of Commission; from starvation of an animal to dog fighting and physically harming an animal.

This generated the discussion on current cases within the United States; Michael Vick, the professional

football player, Earl Simmons, AKA DMX a professional rap singer, Elmer and Ammon Zimmerman, Pennsylvania Amish Kennel Owners and Bill, Wanda and Bobby Jones [alleged of animal hoarding] cases in Arizona. Each of these cases is found on the internet as well as local news reporting.

The students were provided with resource website information, such as www.pupymillrescue.com, www.pet-abuse.com, which would enable them to track and review information at their leisure.

There were a scant amount of students that were volunteers within the community; participating in Big Brothers or Big Sisters and Methamphetamine Awareness. I provided an additional spectrum of volunteer avenues for them; contact the local animal shelter and donate their time by walking, socializing and cleaning out the kennels, provide blankets or food for the shelter and educate others on puppy mills.

Following the presentation, the instructor informed me that it was a success and stirred conversation in addition to the student thought process. From this, I gleaned a success. As one of my dear friends' candidly state, this is entitled, "Paying it forward to educate others."

Reputable Breeder was discussed in the fact that health testing is conducted on breeding stock, breeding only to improve the breed, breeds limited numbers of litters, is involved in rescue as well as conformation or sporting events and will accept a dog they've bred back at any time in their life. 🐾

RESOURCES USED AND CREDIT ACKNOWLEDGED TO

Wikipedia
www.pupymillrescue.com
Hunte Corporation
www.iggyplanet.com, www.pet-abuse.com
www.washingtonpost.com
www.petstorecruelty.org