

Puppy mill protesters target Lincoln Park's Pawsh Puppies



Lincoln Park Now

[jennkloc](#) on 11.21.09

You know those teeny-tiny, adorable little puppies that are all the rage in Lincoln Park? Well, they've worked some Chicagoans into a rage of their own.

Today at about 1:30 p.m., Twitter user [@Davie_St](#) posted two tweets about a big protest he discovered outside of Pawsh Puppies at 2120 N. Halsted in Lincoln Park:

[@Davie_St](#): Passed a lively, homegrown protest outside a Lincoln Park froo-froo doggies-for-sale boutique. Looked like fun!

[@Davie_St](#): Sign: "Here \$1500 buys one sick dog. At animal shelters, \$1500 adopts 150 dogs."
Ah, good point.



A group of protesters from the Puppy Mill Project picketed outside Pawsh Puppies in Lincoln Park for 3 hours today, according to Pawsh Puppies store manager Alex Gershbeyn. Photo by flickr user kellymcheese.

According to [Pawsh Puppies](#) store manager Alex Gershbeyn, the protest was organized by a Chicago group called the Puppy Mill Project and, "they're just crazy," he said in a telephone interview.

He estimated that about 30 people with picket signs yelled and screamed at his customers as they came into the store from noon to 3 p.m. Despite the mob's efforts, Gershbeyn said that Pawsh sold 2 puppies during the protest.

"At the end of the day, they're just pissed off and angry at our success," Gershbeyn said.

If you check out the [Yelp reviews for Pawsh Puppies](#), you will find more harsh criticism. Pawsh has 7 user reviews, all of only 1 or 2 stars out of a possible 5. Allegations of poor customer service and sick, puppy mill puppies dominate the company's Yelp page.

A serious comment war about Pawsh Puppies is waging on a [San Francisco blogger's website](#) as well, which furthers the negative publicity. Blogspot user [Ana Poe](#) blogs for her small business, Paco Collars, which refuses to sell accessories to any store that also sell pets.

According to a blog post from Ana Poe dating in March of this year, a Pawsh employee contacted her to see if they could supply Paco Collars at their Lincoln Park location. In the comments section, accusations of Pawsh buying from puppy mills run rampant. There is even a boycott threat dating as recently as November 10.

Still, Gershbeyn insists that Pawsh Puppies works with only good breeders who are USDA certified and thus subject to inspections to ensure that they meet federal standards. "We're huge animal lovers. We would never work with puppy mills," Gershbeyn said.

He claims that the Puppy Mill Project and other Pawsh haters are just angry at his store because, "there's so many dogs at shelters, and they just want everyone to adopt from shelters."

"If you come into our store, you know these aren't puppy mill puppies," Gershbeyn said. "There's a lot of pet stores out there that should be protested, but we're not one of them." He believes that the protesters' complaints would be better directed at actual puppy mills, not his store.

In January, John Fritchey (D-Chicago), who represents the Lincoln Park neighborhood in Springfield, proposed legislation that would crack down on puppy mills, according to [an article from the Chicago Breaking News Center](#). The article credits Fritchey saying the bill is designed to prevent puppy mills from taking their factory-like approach to animal breeding, with an emphasis on maximum output with minimal cost and care.

The bill was backed by the Humane Society of the United States and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Last month, the Humane Society of the United States issued a puppy-friendly pet store pledge for pet store owners to sign as a result of the efforts of local, Chicago-area animal advocates.

Because the pledge requires that the pet stores do not sell pets but instead refer customers to local shelters or provide information about how to find a reputable breeder, neither Pawsh Puppies nor their competitor Pocket Puppies appears on [the list](#).

Still, Gershbeyn adamantly denies that Pawsh Puppies supplies their stores from puppy mills. The Lincoln Park location opened 7 months ago, and Gershbeyn said, "We wanted to change the image of pet stores."

"We work only with good breeders," he said.

Pawsh Puppies' biggest competitor in the Lincoln Park neighborhood is [Pocket Puppies](#) at 2479 N. Clark St. Although their [Yelp credentials](#) are a little better, they still only average a 2.5 star rating, and many users also accuse Pocket Puppies of buying from puppy mills.

For those who want to sidestep the controversy altogether, the Lincoln Park neighborhood is also home to Chicago's largest no-kill animal shelter, PAWS Chicago (Pets Are Worth Saving) at 1997 N. Clybourn St.