

PAW PRINTS

The bad, ugly and really ugly business of puppy mills

Mindi Callison worries many people have no idea what puppy mill dogs go through. Since falling in love with a puppy in a pet store while attending college in 2008, Callison's curiosity about her dog and his parents became a mission to educate others about puppy mills. Her goal is to end the cruelty of puppy mills and the pet stores and online sites that keep them in business and she accomplishes that through the nonprofit she founded, Bailing Out Benji.

She says the Siberian husky she purchased had worms and giardia, both of which require veterinary care. Pet store employees said all puppies have them, but with years of experience since being told this 15 years ago, she knows otherwise. She said her dog, Ozzie, led a remarkably healthy life despite being a mill puppy.

That is certainly not the case for many, if not most, including Callison's recent adoptee, a golden retriever named Eleanor. Truthfully, if you have a weak constitution, do not read the rest of this paragraph because what this sweet dog was put through is not just horrific, it is criminal. The puppy mill breeder, who eventually was charged with crimes by the U.S. Justice Department, had more than 800 dogs, including Eleanor. Eleanor was a puppy mill mama who was artificially inseminated not long after having a litter. Whoever performed the implant sewed the dog back up with fishing line,



MICHELE MURPHY

not the dissolvable thread used by veterinarians. I've been cut, sliced actually, by fishing line. Not surprisingly, Eleanor developed Pyometra, an infection of the uterus. This preventable infection caused her womb to fill with pus. It can lead to kidney failure, toxemia, dehydration and death. She almost died until the government ordered this despicable individual's facility to close and sell all the dogs he had in his possession. Eleanor was rescued by an organization and Callison was the lucky person who ultimately adopted Eleanor.

It goes without saying that Callison, her supportive volunteers, other rescue organizations and a plethora of newspaper articles about this puppy mill breeder's repeated serious violations contributed to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S Justice Department pursuing their own investigations and bringing criminal charges. His ultimate conviction led to fines and a jail term and, most importantly, saving the 500 dogs he held.

But, here's the thing. This guy is just one of many who should never be able to touch an animal. Ever.

Recently, the Humane Society of the United States recently

published their Horrible 100 list — the list of puppy mill breeders who commit egregious offenses on innocent animals. What's worse? Ohio is — once again — near the top with 13 on the list.

Callison, whose organization maintains a database of puppy mills across the U.S., and pet stores that sell them, told me Ohio "owns" another "top place" in being number three in the country for puppy stores selling mill puppies.

I'm not done. Ohio has hundreds of puppy mills. Try to digest that number given that many mill operators have hundreds of dogs. It's huge and the Ohio Department of Agriculture has just a handful of staff to inspect these facilities. That doesn't include those who refuse access, or move around frequently, or sell out of a backyard or barn, known as backyard breeders with no state regulation to ensure they are sanitary and treat animals well by, you know, giving them clean water to drink, decent food everyday and vet care. Are you horrified to know that some breeders believe in "D-I-Y" vet care? Think Eleanor.

Bailing Out Benji now has hundreds of volunteers in 36 states, including Ohio. While the goal is to get dogs out of puppy mills, Callison won't do it with hyperbolic protests or by trash-mouthing a group others may believe are largely responsible for puppy mill problems. Volunteers spend their time educating the public about the dangers of puppy mills for the very puppy they wish to adopt. They attend

community events and, yes, they will gather near stores known to sell mill puppies to distribute literature and talk one-on-one with potential puppy buyers.

There's another group of volunteers who monitor legislative activities that can help protect puppy mill adults and puppies, and still others that help with social media and responses to information requests from members of the public. They also maintain a section on their website about how to identify a good breeder. Callison says it's important to tell the public not everyone who breeds is a puppy mill breeder.

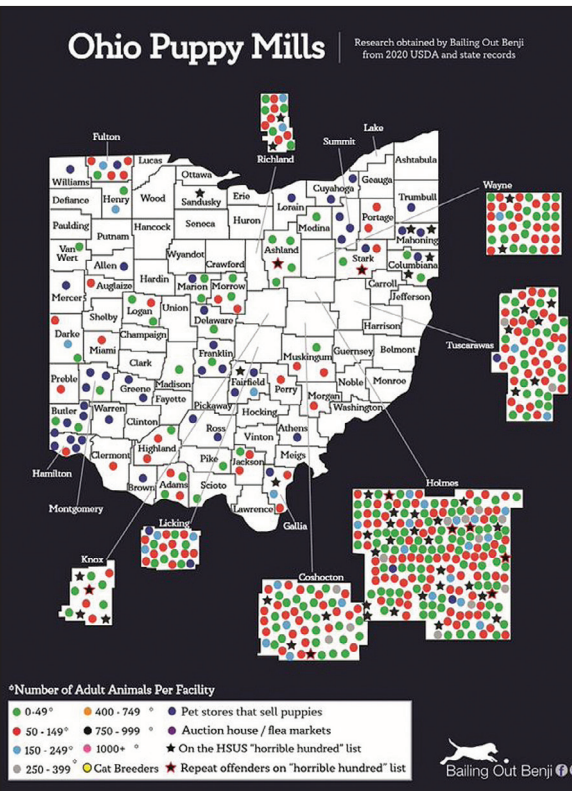
Callson thinks the tide is slowly turning — and that will help save more dogs from a miserable existence.

"We treat our cats and dogs as kids so that might be why we're seeing a shift in attitude as more and more people see dogs as part of the family," she said.

It seems painfully slow, however, because she knows there are literally thousands of Benji's waiting for someone to release them from a hellish existence and provide them a safe, loving home for the rest of their lives.

Interested in helping or learning more about this cause? Visit their website <https://bailingout-benji.com/> The Ohio Chapter maintains a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/puppymillfreeoh>

If you have ideas for stories about pets, send them along. Michele Murphy looks forward to sharing them with her readers. Contact her at avonlakemurphy@gmail.com.



Ohio has the dubious distinction of having hundreds of puppy mills and retail stores that sell mill puppies. This map, published in 2020, is being updated to reflect that Ohio now has nearly double the number of puppy mills it had just three years ago. At left, Mindi Callison, founder of Bailing Out Benji, hugs Eleanor, one of her four rescue dogs.


CRITTERCHRONICLES

Each week The Chronicle-Telegram features pets from area animal shelters and rescues available for adoption. To inquire about this week's pets, call the numbers listed below. For more pets seeking homes, visit www.chroniclet.com. If you work or volunteer for a nonprofit pet adoption agency and would like to see your pets included in Critter Chronicles, contact Iseabold@chroniclet.com or avonlakemurphy@gmail.com.


FRIENDSHIP APL OF LORAIN COUNTY

LOCATION: 8303 Murray Ridge Road, Elyria; **CONTACT:** adoptions@friendshipapl.org; **PHONE:** (440) 322-4321; **WEBSITE:** friendshipapl.org
■ Business hours are 11 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday. No appointment is necessary.
■ Adoptions are on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications will not be accepted in advance.
■ All dogs receive one or more vaccinations, a basic veterinary examination, are dewormed, heartworm tested, microchipped and spayed or neutered.
■ All cats receive one or more vaccinations, a basic veterinary examination, tested negative for feline leukemia, are dewormed and spayed or neutered.
■ If you have kids or other pets in your family and are interested in adopting a Friendship dog or cat please bring them with you for a meet and greet.
■ If you visit the shelter and don't see the particular animal you are looking for, please ask at the front desk.

Cletus
BREED: Plott hound/mountain cur mix; **SEX:** Male; **NEUTERED:** Yes; shots current; **AGE:** 9 years; **SIZE:** Medium; **ADOPTION FEE:** \$125
Cletus is a handsome 9 year old hound mix looking for a forever home. We know Cletus is going to fly right out of here with his new family because he's such a nice dog. We have definitely classified Cletus as a Velcro dog, because he just wants to be by your side, snuggling the day away. He's such a gentle soul who loves everyone. Cletus would truly love a quiet home, where he can be pampered and spoiled as he so deserves. He is dog-selective so a meet and greet with a resident dog would be mandatory but with all of the love he has to give you, Cletus is all you would really need. He enjoys chasing cats and should not go to a home with feline friends. Let's help Cletus find his forever home today!



Robin
BREED: Domestic medium hair; **SEX:** Female; **SPAYED:** Yes; shots current; **AGE:** Adult; **SIZE:** Medium; **ADOPTION FEE:** \$25
Beautiful!! Just absolutely beautiful! Meet Robin, an amazing adult medium-haired tuxedo gal. Robin is a quiet, laid-back loving soul we hope finds a forever home quickly. Hurry on in to add Robin to your loving home today!



HARTMAN'S HOUNDS
CONTACT: hartmanshounds@gmail.com or call Peggy (440) 452-1619

Remi
BREED: Treeing walker coonhound mix; **SEX:** Male; **NEUTERED:** Yes; shots current; **AGE:** 6 to 7 years; **SIZE:** 52 pounds; **ADOPTION FEE:** \$150
Remi came from an overcrowded shelter in southern Ohio through a rescue partner. He apparently did not have a good life and was kept outside. However, this boy has really blossomed and is loving life in a home. He is pretty much house trained and is very calm in the home. Happy to be with you, that's really all he wants. Remi is good with other dogs but should not be in a home with cats due to his breed. He loves all people and would be great with respectful children. He has learned to walk on a leash and loves his walks. A fenced-in yard is required. Remi will make a perfect best friend.



MULTIPLE BREED RESCUE
CONTACT: rescue@mbrohio.com
WEBSITE: www.mbrohio.com

**Sheila**
BREED: Jack Russell mix; **SEX:** Female; **SPAYED:** Yes; shots current; **AGE:** 4 years; **SIZE:** 30 pounds; **ADOPTION FEE:** \$350
Sheila came from a local shelter with kennel cough and pneumonia. She's been treated, is doing well and ready to find her forever home. Sheila is crate-trained and working on potty training and leash manners. She is cat-, dog- and kid-friendly. She wants ALL the toys and is looking for a fenced yard where she can get all her energy out. Sheila is very smart and eager-to-please, and would love to have a fur sibling and/or children to play with.


Ruben
BREED: Lab mix; **SEX:** Male; **NEUTERED:** Yes; shots current; **AGE:** About 6 months; **SIZE:** 25 pounds; **ADOPTION FEE:** \$450
Energetic Ruben is potty- and crate-trained and learning basic obedience, including what he can and can't chew on. He is dog- and cat-friendly, but hasn't been around children. Ruben loves to play and his new home should be active to help him get out his energy. He loves all of the squeaky toys and enjoys getting his toys out of the toy box. He's looking for a home with a fenced yard or a secure tie-out.




Aries
BREED: Australian cattle dog/blue heeler mix; **SEX:** Male; **NEUTERED:** Yes; shots current; **AGE:** 1 year; **SIZE:** 33 pounds; **ADOPTION FEE:** \$125
Meet amazing Aries, an approximately 1-year-old cattle dog mix looking for his forever home. Cattle dogs are active and energetic and due to the herding nature of his breed, Aries should not go to a home with cats or children under 16. Aries is fun and super playful and will do best with an experienced adopter who's familiar with his breed. Cattle dogs typically are extremely smart, often wary of strangers and have boundless energy which makes them a great fit for someone looking for a running partner/agility dog and/or hiking companion. Dogs of this breed are often happiest when they have a "job" and when not challenged they can become mischievous. Don't delay, come and meet Aries today!

Kennedy
BREED: Boxer mix; **SEX:** Female; **SPAYED:** Yes; shots current; **AGE:** 2 years; **SIZE:** 50 pounds; **ADOPTION FEE:** \$125
Meet Kennedy, a loveable, energetic 2-year-old boxer mix who can now add Prison Trained Graduate to her resume. During the past two months in training, Kennedy focused on basic commands, leash walking, socialization and manners. According to her trainers, Kennedy enjoys playing fetch with toys and sticks, is a master at zoomies, loves to go for walks and does well on leash. Kennedy is also well rounded and loves everyone she meets, including other dogs. She has a zest for life and sometimes a rambunctious play style but calms down easily. Kennedy would be the perfect companion for an active adopter who is looking for an adventurous forever friend. She longs to leave the shelter life behind and get into a loving home — maybe you can grant her wish? Upon adoption, Kennedy's adopter will meet with the FAPL trainer to learn what has been taught in the program. An appointment will be set up at a mutually agreed upon time with staff for this free training session!



**Delilah**
BREED: Terrier mix; **SEX:** Female; **SPAYED:** Yes; shots current; **AGE:** 1 year; **SIZE:** Medium; **ADOPTION FEE:** \$125
Meet delightful Delilah, an approximately 1-year-old mixed breed gal looking for her forever home. Delilah spent most of her life confined to a cage and because of that, it takes her a minute to warm up to people. She will do best with a loving, patient adopter who wants to help her get accustomed to the simple things in life and freedoms that all dogs should be able to enjoy. Children in her new home should be old enough to understand and respect her personal boundaries until she feels safe and comfortable. Don't delay, come and meet this lovely young lady today!

**Mummy**
BREED: Domestic short hair; **SEX:** Female; **SPAYED:** Yes; shots current; **AGE:** 4 years; **SIZE:** Medium; **ADOPTION FEE:** \$25
Magnificent Mummy is going to warm your heart with so much love! This stunning 4-year-old gal spent time in a loving foster home and was adored. She is very friendly and seems to do well with dogs, too. She just wants a loving home where she is pampered and spoiled to the moon and back! Head on in today to adopt Mummy!

