

Activist Corner

Ads For Animals

By Liz Ross

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Missouri resident Charlene Pedrolie defines the role of animal activist. After losing her two canine companions in 2005, she decided to turn her grief into action.

“Emotionally, I was not ready to adopt another dog but I wanted to help abused dogs. I had heard about not buying from pet shops, but never really understood why,” Pedrolie recalled. “I did a lot of research and was horrified to learn about the abuse at puppy mills. I was equally shocked that Missouri is considered (by the animal protection community) to be the worst puppy mill state in the country.”

Through her research, Pedrolie discovered that the Missouri Department of Agriculture’s inspection and regulation of puppy mills has been grossly inadequate, and that dogs have suffered as a direct consequence. “Seeing actual pictures of dogs in puppy mills was so horrifying. I’ll never forget the image of one dog who had a broken jaw and could not even close her mouth and could barely eat or drink. I vowed to do everything I could to stop this animal abuse,” Pedrolie said.

Believing other citizens were also unaware of the situation, she took the most direct route she could think of to get the word out: she ran an ad in the *Jefferson City News Tribune* imploring Missouri Department of Agriculture Director Fred Ferrell to take action. The newspaper received such an overwhelming response that Pedrolie ran subsequent ads on puppy mills, both in Missouri and in Ohio, her previous residence. And when Missouri’s two U.S. Senators, Republicans Jim Talent and Kit Bond, voted against a measure to end horse slaughter, she let voters know through the ads. In one, she asked, “KIT, DO YOU SUPPORT ANIMAL ABUSE?”, referencing

Senator Bond’s general voting record on animal issues.

Pedrolie explained that she targets newspapers in Jefferson City, the state capital, and other key voter areas. By using smaller, well-read local papers, she keeps costs down (ad rates run from \$200-\$500), is virtually guaranteed prominent placement, and still gets the desired response from readers.

The ads have generated numerous calls to elected officials, and prompted even more press coverage. Most importantly, they also have sparked public debate.

“People started talking about the ads – the horror of puppy mills, that they never knew this was happening, and that they never knew our Senators and elected officials didn’t support animal welfare measures,” Pedrolie noted. “I believe this is just the beginning. With many residents now educated about this issue and committed to ensuring Missouri’s Senators vote in favor of animal welfare, I think we will see a difference.”



Liz Ross is Director of Special Projects for the Doris Day Animal League. She specializes in horse protection issues, including efforts to end horse slaughter. She also works to end the use of great apes in entertainment.