



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Barkworks Pet Store Folds Under Pressure From Anti- Pet Shop/Puppy Mill Nonprofit

Following a protracted anti-puppy mill campaign by The Companion Animal Protection Society, the Barkworks pet store in Los Angeles' Westside Pavilion will be closing.

LOS ANGELES – The Westside Pavilion location of Barkworks, the largest pet shop chain in the Los Angeles area, is closing for good on Monday. Barkworks has been the target of investigations and campaign outreach by the Companion Animal Protection Society (CAPS), a national nonprofit whose primary focus is the pet shop and puppy mill industry.

CAPS is actively involved with a consumer class action lawsuit against Barkworks, which now has five stores - after the Westside Pavilion closing - in Southern California. CAPS filed the lawsuit on December 14 in Los Angeles Superior Court.

CAPS conducted undercover investigations of Barkworks' suppliers and found dogs suffering in substandard commercial breeding operations called puppy mills, not the private breeders Barkworks claim they use. CAPS investigators found violations of both state and federal laws.

Two of the worst breeders investigated by CAPS were Barb Crick in Nebraska and Amos Slabaugh in Missouri. Crick has been under investigation by USDA for approximately two years. Her August 2012 USDA inspection report had numerous, serious violations of the Animal Welfare Act.

The CAPS investigations of Crick uncovered filth, inadequate shelter, sick dogs and other serious violations. In February 2008, Crick tied a mother Golden Retriever to a fence and shot her to death with a .22. The USDA inspector found the dog on the same day and merely cited Crick for not following the veterinary guidelines whereby gunshot is not an acceptable means of euthanasia. The inspector failed to go to the authorities even though shooting a dog to death is cruelty under Nebraska law.

At Slabaugh's facility, in addition to finding puppies in 18 degree (much colder with the wind chill) weather without bedding, fecal accumulation, sick dogs, old dogs with cataracts, and shoddy housing with sharp edges, the investigator discovered a goat that had frozen to death (it was alive just the day before) next to the decomposing body of another animal reduced to fur and bones and the jaw bone of another animal.

CAPS also obtained and analyzed several years of veterinary records for puppies at the Westside Pavilion location. This evidence, which is part of the lawsuit, proves that the puppies sold by Barkworks at this location were often sick and in some cases, died from congenital and infectious diseases. Parovirus, a highly contagious, often deadly disease, coccidia, giardia, pneumonia, neurological problems, and

blindness were just some of the many disorders documented in veterinary records.

CAPS' undercover investigations of Barkworks' suppliers were included in its lengthy pet shop and puppy mill investigation report to the Los Angeles City Council, leading L.A. to be the 28th city in the U.S. to pass a ban on the sale of factory-bred dogs and cats in pet stores. The legislation is particularly important because it makes L.A. the largest city in the United States and Canada to ban pet stores from selling dogs, cats and rabbits from commercial breeders.

On December 9, 2009, the busiest shopping day of the year, CAPS held a landmark peaceful protest with 72 participants **inside Westside Pavilion Mall** in Los Angeles against one of seven Barkworks stores. The protest was a landmark demonstration for the California animal protection movement because *pet shops that sell puppy mill dogs inside shopping malls*, had been immune to the increasing public outcry over the puppy mill issue. After researching California Supreme Court cases, we realized that the California Constitution, which is more expansive than the federal version, protected our rights to protest inside a mall - a de facto public forum under California case law. Moreover, California case law protects the rights of protesters to call for a boycott of a specific business within a shopping center or mall.

CAPS' documentary about Barkworks and plaintiff Kim Haba, who purchased a very sick puppy that died on December 24, 2009, one week after purchase, was one of the most shared videos on CNN iReport. CAPS held a second protest on February 13, 2010 with 89 participants inside the mall in honor of Valentine's Day, a loveless day at Barkworks. The third protest on April 13, 2010 had more than 100 participants, including 70 inner city public high school students. **The most recent protest at Westside Pavilion (we held a Valentine's 2011 protest against the Barkworks location in Thousand Oaks) was on December 18, 2010 with 130 participants.** In lieu of signs, CAPS protesters wore tee shirts and carried large shopping bags – all with slogans or messages. CAPS worked closely with the LAPD whose officers provided protection of our First Amendment Rights in light of the mall's threats to have security guards arrest the protesters. CAPS was planning to hold another large protest against Barkworks inside Westside Pavilion in the next month, but now that won't be necessary.

“Pop the champagne corks! The cries of dogs in puppy mills and in our shelters have been heard by the community. L.A. consumers want a cruelty-free pet shop and Barkworks ignored them. We are that much closer to a time when puppy mills fade into history and when every homeless shelter pet is adopted by a loving family,” Carole Raphaele Davis, West Coast Director, CAPS.

Founded by President Deborah Howard in 1992, the Companion Animal Protection Society (CAPS) is the only national nonprofit organization dedicated exclusively to protecting companion animals from cruelty in pet shops and puppy mills. CAPS actively addresses the abuse and suffering of pet shop and puppy mill dogs through investigations, education, media relations, legislative involvement, puppy mill dog rescues, consumer assistance and pet industry employee relations.

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More Info:

CAPS on Humane Stores	LA City Ordinance - Council File No. 11-0754
CAPS on Barkworks	Barkworks Lawsuit

Links to Crick and Slabaugh on website

