



Companion Animal Protection Society



**Deborah A. Howard
Founder and President**

More than 22 years ago, public relations professional Deborah Howard walked into a Docktor Pet Center franchise – one of more than 300 nationwide – in Atlanta, Georgia, not knowing that that she was about to undergo an epiphany that would forever change her life. A tiny yellow Labrador puppy pressed an open cut against the wire bars of a dirty small cage. As she held this puppy, she wondered about his origins. After some research, Howard discovered, to her horror, that most pet shop puppies come from “puppy mills,” commercial breeding facilities that mass-produce dogs for resale. She knew she had no choice but to take action.

In 1990, Howard, who has a law degree and had been a radio news reporter, formed the Companion Animal Protection Society (CAPS), a national nonprofit organization dedicated to stopping the abuse and suffering of companion animals in pet shops and puppy mills. CAPS has been a 501(c)(3) since 1992.

Howard was born and raised in Los Angeles California by parents who were both accomplished. Her parents met in New York while her mother was studying opera and her father was an actor on Broadway. They decided to move to Los Angeles to pursue acting careers. Howard’s parents adored animals; she grew up with dogs, cats, rabbits and fish. Sharing a special bond with animals since she was a baby, Deborah learned to stand and walk with Blitz, her German Shepherd.

Encouraged by her mother, a lifelong political activist who grew up in Boston, Howard started as an activist at age 8 when she participated in Robert F. Kennedy’s presidential campaign. Howard’s childhood political experience led her to volunteer with the United Farm Workers. She helped coordinate protests and worked on Proposition 14 (the right for farm workers to vote in elections and to guarantee the right for the Agriculture Labor Relations Board (ALRB) to be funded).

Turning down a full time position with the United Farm Workers, Howard had her sights on the New College of Florida, a top ranked small liberal arts college where she majored in Political Science in the hopes of becoming a lawyer and eventually a politician. During her last quarter in college, she interned as a radio news reporter for a local news/talk radio station, becoming the station’s first intern to ever work on air. She seriously considered going into television reporting but attended Santa Clara

Law School instead. While studying law she realized her real interest was still in the communications field.

After doing an internship with a San Francisco area PR agency, Howard became an account executive in Porter Novelli's San Francisco office where she handled national accounts. The experience she gained at this agency gave her the skills needed to start Howard Communications, an Atlanta-based agency.

Shortly after visiting the Docktor Pet Center in Atlanta, Howard decided to use her public relations experience to address the sad plight of pet shop and puppy mill animals. She contacted "20/20" and discovered they had been thinking about doing a story on the pet shop/puppy mill issue but didn't have the necessary documentation and video footage. Steadfast and tenacious, she heard of an animal activist who had taken a job at one of the Docktor Pet Centers merely to help the animals. She provided the young man with a camcorder so that he could document conditions for the "20/20" expose. He also made copies of numerous store records. Through this groundbreaking news story, she met Bob Baker, then the leading puppy mill investigator in the country. Mr. Baker became an investigator for CAPS, served as the organization's vice-president and was on the board for many years. He is now an Advisory Board member.

Howard also used her organizational skills, obtained through years of working for political campaigns and causes, to organize pet shop protests from 1990 to 1993 the weekend before Christmas in 30 – 40 cities across the United States and Canada. The producer at "20/20" even agreed to air an update story on Docktor Pet Centers the night before the protests in 1991. The new CEO of Docktor Pet Centers claimed in his interview for this piece that the company did not buy from puppy mills. Mr. Baker's footage proved otherwise. As a result of CAPS' efforts, Docktor Pet Centers, Inc., who refused to do business without the sale of puppies, filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy in February 1993.

Howard's TV news interviews include Animal Planet, CNN, CBS, NBC, ABC and FOX. She has done radio, newspaper and magazine interviews for national and international media. A consummate PR professional, Howard has generated publicity on the pet shop and puppy mill issue with the following media: CNN, "Dateline," "20/20," (three times) "Hard Copy," "Marketplace" (a top rated national consumer program on CBC), Life, People, Reader's Digest, Detroit Free Press, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Tulsa World and numerous local television news stations and newspapers.

For relaxation, Howard, a true renaissance woman, enjoys playing cello and flute, singing, dancing, swimming, snowshoeing and studying languages – *that is when she isn't working*, which is most of the time. She and her Australian Cattle Dog mixes, Spencer and Wylie, run on the trails in and around Cohasset, MA. Howard can also be found in the kitchen baking vegan treats for her friends and for her five rescued companion animals, Spencer, Wylie, Beatrice (Basset Hound), Jack (Orange Tabby) and Miles (Orange/White Tabby).