

## A Letter of Introduction & Thanks to our Friends and Customers



Let me first start with a huge thank you for your support and the opportunity to serve you as our customer. Some of you have known us for over 13 years and some of you have just come to know us. Debbie and I, as owners, are so honored that you have confidence and faith in us and want to be "allies" with our company. We thank you!

We are a family owned and operated, Michigan based company. The bulk of my time and effort is spent on the "How" we do what we do. The pet industry requires a lot of work to keep us moving in the right direction. We are in an industry that is wrought with abuse and neglect. This is what gives the animal rights groups' ammunition and license to paint all pet stores with the same brush. I spend hours every day working on the betterment of our stores, as well as our breeders and other pet stores across the nation.

In the past 3 years we have taken a huge step, unlike other pet stores, to work directly with the breeders that raise the puppies we provide to the client families we service. This was prompted due to the unwillingness of the distributors/brokers we have used in the past to allow us to physically visit the breeders they were getting the puppies from. With the growing desire of the public, and our staff, to understand where we get our puppies from... this is a must! We could no longer rely on the distributors/brokers to inspect, teach and police the breeders they use.

In an effort to be able to wholeheartedly say, "We have personally been there", we decided to take a road trip. In the summer of 2008 Debbie and I hopped on a plane, flew to Kansas City, MO... rented a car and drove 8 days through the Midwest; Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Arkansas. We visited many breeders that were described as the "Ones that we should see". Even though there were many good qualities observed... we still had the issue of transporting our puppies such a long distance. We ended the week at a Missouri breeder conference, an annual continuing education seminar and connected with a group of Amish breeders much closer to home in Northern Indiana. We set a time to meet once we got home to Michigan. After visiting and inspecting about 20 breeders in Indiana, we selected 5 that we felt would meet our standards. These breeders being only 2 ½ hours from Detroit would also minimize the stress of travel for our puppies. We have all but eliminated kennel cough & many of the other stress related illnesses.

Because 5 breeders are not able to handle the demand of our customer base, we have been in process of expanding our breeder family. We have visited over 100 breeders, trying to find the ones that meet our standards. Throughout this process we brought on 14 more Indiana breeders that we have approved. The past 2 ½ years we have enjoyed working with, and teaching these breeders what is required to sell to The Family Puppy. They have taught us a lot also and we are so pleased with their work ethics and willingness to be what we require of our breeders. Here are a few of the things we require of our breeders:

- 1) **Exercise and Socialization**-Exercise pens to get the breeding parents out of the kennel regularly. The elements of these "Playgrounds" are: Minimum of 45' in length, Shade available, Covered primary water source, Grassed ground cover and a Cool-Down kiddie pool for hot days. We strongly suggest these exercise areas are actually the perimeter fence that encompasses the kennel building to make the act of getting the dogs out simple and not a chore. These playgrounds are used for group play of both breeding parents and litter to litter interaction. We have personally seen the joy in the dogs as they romp with each other. This dog-to-dog interaction is huge in the area of socialization. This socialization helps set the temperament of the pups and has set us above the pack in providing gentle family puppies!
- 2) **Veterinary Care**- Dr. Hilary Reinhold is charged with screening and tracking any health issues in the pups we purchase. Dr. Hilary travels to the kennels a minimum of 4 times a year (4 times what USDA requires) to examine and care for all breeding parents. We have begun genetic testing of parent dogs' hearts and patellas on small breeds, and hips on large breeds. The breeders are submitting for OFA certification. Both Dr. Hilary and the vets that visit the store weekly examine each and every puppy before we allow them to be sold.

This proactive screening of breeding parents coupled with two puppy exams is NOT being done anywhere in the pet industry, that I know of, and is a great benefit for our customers.

- 3) **Breeding Practices-** We have established guidelines for breeding age and frequency. We also have a strict policy against In-Breeding or Line-Breeding. They were already in compliance with the majority of these requirements.
- 4) **Kenel Design-** We have designed a retrofit to the kennels to increase the size of the kennel above and beyond what USDA Animal Welfare Act requires and if possible remove the top row of kennels making the kennel single level. We have also found flooring that we suggest replacing coated wire, even though we know wire flooring is the best for sanitation, that's why many shelters use it in their kennels.

These improvements and changes are unheard of in the industry and the willingness of this group of breeders to make positive changes in their facilities and the welfare of the breeding parents is wonderful and heartwarming to me. We have shared these concepts with many other breeders & pet stores across the country, we've been told it is not doable. Even with all we do above and beyond required by law, and although pet stores only account for only 7% of the puppies sold in the United States, Pam Sordyl is still protesting in front of our Flint store because we have the most locations in Michigan. Her position is ADOPT don't SHOP. She has sent this demand to all 52 pet stores in Michigan:

***Puppy Mill Awareness is asking all of the 52 Southeast Michigan pet stores to:***

- ***Agree to no longer sell animals acquired from breeders in their store(s) or on the Internet;***
- ***The only dogs transferred, sold or retained shall be "rescued" dogs from gov't shelters or 501(c)(3) rescues***

Pam tells people she has been to some of our kennels... yet on a radio interview April 28<sup>th</sup> she said she has never really been to any of our kennels. I have spoken with her trying to explain that our breeders are different and she told me. "I don't care how good or how your breeders have improved, unless you stop buying from breeders and only get your puppies from 501(c)(3) shelters, we will be picketing your store".

Founded on Feb. 14, 1998 we have served Metro Detroit for 13 years by creating a safe and more enjoyable experience for families looking to welcome a pet into their home. Selling an average 300 puppies per store per year has allowed us to help over 20,000 families find the puppy of their dreams. We also have an adoption program for unwanted kittens and have adopted over 10,000 kittens that would have gone to area shelters. We have been a BBB member since we started upholding our A+ rating all along the way.

There are only 4 places you can get a new puppy; **1) Shelters and Rescues** **2) Show Breeders** **3) Casual Breeders** or **4) A pet store partnering with a Professional Breeder**. All have good points and we believe you have the right to choose which is best for your family. We have always had 10' banners in our stores that say, **"Have you visited your local animal shelter first?"** and encourage everyone to look there first. If you cannot find a puppy that fits your family, we would be thrilled if you would become part of our family.

*Pet stores partnering with professional breeders are the **ONLY** one of the 4 choices with any oversight and regulations.*

**Our breeders are inspected by:**

*United States Department of Agriculture  
Indiana State Board of Health*

- *American Kennel Club*  
- *and the owners of The Family Puppy*



*We are who we are to help families find a new bundle joy to adore and love for years! Thanks for listening, and we hope we will be able to assist your family when you are ready for your new puppy,*

*John and Debbie Stottele*