

# Ry-Con owner didn't care about dogs, children, former employee says

By Kelly Kennedy, 7news [WSPA.com](http://WSPA.com), Feb 08, 2019

RALEIGH, N.C. (WNCN) - For the past month, CBS 17 has been digging into Apex nonprofit Ry-Con Service Dogs.

The business shut down in November and 50 people have filed complaints with the attorney general's office. CBS 17 has spoken with affected families and former trainers.

Now, another former Ry-Con employee is coming forward to share her story. This employee worked at Ry-Con during the summer of 2017 and is speaking exclusively with CBS 17's Kelly Kennedy.

Justine Lunsford is an animal lover.

"I had felt horrible about not doing anything right from the start," Lunsford said.

Which is why she says her experience at Ry-Con still haunts her more than a year later.

"It bothered me for a long time," said Lunsford. "I was worried and I just hope that he's not able to manipulate his way out of this."

Lunsford says Mark Mathis hired her to clean kennels and care for the dogs in July 2017. She says she witnessed a lot of shocking things.

"He proceeded to just pull the puppy," Lunsford recalled. "The puppy was a tiny puppy, probably has never been on a leash in its life and just froze and didn't know what to do and the more the puppy froze the more he just yanked it and pulled it and the puppy started like choking and he just kept going and I was horrified and he said that's how you get them to listen to you."

Lunsford says Mathis would also put two shock collars on dogs that barked to keep them quiet.

On one 90-degree day after taking the dogs for a 20-minute walk - she claims this happened.

"When we got back I started to give the dogs water and he said not to because they'll just piss all over the runs," Lunsford said. Lunsford says Mathis fired her in September 2017 after she questioned him about the way he ran things.

"All he cared about was looking good to other people," Lunsford said of Mathis. "He didn't actually care about the children or the dogs. All he did was talk about himself and tell you what he was doing. He resented any suggestion that you made to him, he just would blow it off and tell you why you were wrong."

Lunsford is one of 50 people who has filed complaints with the attorney general's office.

"I never saw a kind man," said Lunsford. "Never. I never saw any concern for anybody else, but Mark."

The attorney general says the investigation could take several months but he is taking all of these allegations very seriously.

CBS 17's Kelly Kennedy reached out to Mathis again.

He responded to her message, but refused to comment and asked her not to contact him again.