

# The Baltimore Sun

## 1. Another sort of pet project Veterinarian embraces her artistic side with her own CD

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Caption: Dr. **Carin Rennings** runs a house-call veterinary service in Howard County. She also has also been working standards and original music.

Right brain or left brain? All her life, Dr. **Carin Rennings** grappled with the question. Was she a right-brain artist or a left-brain scientist?

Only now, having just turned 40, has she come to the comfortable conclusion that she can be both. On the science side, Rennings has built a career in Howard County as a veterinarian who makes house calls. And as an artist, she has nurtured a talent for singing and is looking forward to releasing her first CD, *Love and Miracles*, by the end of the year. Rennings, who lives in Columbia with two cats, Simon and Sam, and a Pomeranian pup named Lilly, grew up in Maryland, Washington and Virginia.

"I knew I wanted to do something with animals," she said. "Animals have always been central to my life."

As a child, she thought animals would serve as subjects for her art. She would spend hours drawing, painting and sculpting animals. She also loved singing.

But her parents pushed her in a direction they considered more practical. If you love animals, they said, become a vet. So Rennings went to the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, graduating in 1994.

When she graduated, she joined a private practice, but didn't like it, she said. "It didn't really feel rewarding to me," she said. The operation seemed more like a business than a place of healing, she said.

Following her instinct and taking a financial risk, Rennings set out on her own, creating a house-call vet business called Home Veterinary Service. At the time, she was living in Montgomery County, so she built up her business there.

But she said she didn't like the traffic and hectic pace. So, about eight years ago, Rennings settled in Howard County and began treating dogs and cats here. Most of her business involves standard procedures such as giving shots or providing routine preventive care.

"I try not to do kitchen-table surgeries," she said with a laugh. But she also offers in-home euthanasia, a service that pet owners find particularly valuable.

Henry and Jennifer Stanton, who live in Ellicott City, said they are grateful for the compassionate way Rennings helped put down their three very old Cairn terriers, Tipper, Maggie and Quincy, all within a few weeks of each other.

"I've had a lot of dogs in my life, and I've done a lot of euthanizing at the vet, and it's just not an optimum situation," Henry Stanton said.

Rennings, on the other hand, was able to help the dogs relax, he said.

"She comes into the house and she's very understanding," Henry Stanton said. "She takes time with the whole thing. She puts the dogs to sleep with a sedative first so they're unaware of the process, and then she puts the dogs down."

He added: "The whole process was not nearly as traumatic" as going to a vet's office.

In recent years, Rennings has focused on alternative medicine for pets. She is certified in reiki, a Japanese form of healing that works on the theory that bodies have energy centers that can become blocked. As a reiki practitioner, Rennings channels energy through her hands to clear those blockages, she said. She also has been studying animal communication for about five years, she said.

Meanwhile, Rennings never put aside her ambition to become a singer. "Somewhere along the line, it dawned on me that I could do both," she said.

She studied with vocal coach Dede Wyland, who is based in Takoma Park, and with the late Pam Bricker of Northern Virginia. She also began singing with local bands, sometimes performing in venues such as Cacao Lane in Ellicott City and the American Visionary Arts Museum in Baltimore.

Since 2002, she has been working on a CD of standards and original music, most with a jazzy feel that highlights her clear, soulful voice. The selections include "Baby It's Cold Outside" and Sheryl Crow's "Strong Enough."

The CD is being produced by Edmund Pirali, an audio engineer who also is a veterinary customer, she said. Pirali described Rennings as a "very good singer" and someone who is in a "very upward trajectory as a musician."

Pirali, who lives in Carroll County, said he got to know Rennings when she treated his cat, Ebu, who "everybody said would die," he said. "Carin was wonderful, very gentle and careful," he said, and Ebu recovered.