

# The View

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## VET with Drive

*Dr. Carin Rennings  
brings veterinary  
care right to your door.*

KAREN RIVERS

**P**op Quiz: You are the proud owner of two dogs who happen to be among the world's biggest breeds – the Great Dane and the Mastiff. Cronus weighs 175 pounds; Mable comes in at a lean 150. Oh, and you also have triplets, who are four-and-a-half years old.

How in the world do you get to the vet?

For Dorney Chesto-Ruck of Ellicott City, this isn't a hypothetical question. It's everyday life. But thankfully, when it's time for her dogs to get a check-up, she doesn't have to go anywhere. She just calls Dr. Carin Rennings and technician Marni Brown, two dedicated and caring women who make veterinary house calls in their green pick-up truck.

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Just two days after being adopted from the Animal Control Shelter, "Eric the Red" receives a check-up from Dr. Carin Rennings and Marni Brown. Photo by Tammi Slater.

# Dr. Carin Rennings

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Rennings has been treating the family's dogs since before the triplets were born, so Chesto-Ruck has never had to consider loading up three kids and 300-plus pounds of dog for a trip to the vet.

"Oh God," she said with a laugh and a groan. "I need to take an aspirin just thinking about it."

While Rennings started out in a typical, busy practice when she got out of veterinary school, a year of seeing stressed-out people and pets in assembly line fashion left her looking for a better way. Nine years ago, she founded Home Veterinary Service, and she's been serving pet owners throughout Howard and Montgomery Counties ever since.

At 37 years old, Rennings is a blue-eyed blonde (and part-time country music singer) who exudes both energy and patience. The owner of two horses, two cats, and a dog, she recently made the move from Woodbine to Ellicott City.

Understandably, her business has thrived mostly through word-of-mouth. When they hear about a vet-on-wheels, Rennings said that "people are just ecstatic."

"[Going to the vet], the majority of animals are terrified. Animals are able to sense emotion. They smell fear, they smell death, no matter how clean and sanitary a hospital is.... But being at home, they're not as aware of what's going on. It's a much more gentle process," she explained.

For the past eight months, she has been working with technician Marni Brown, a former pet sitter with a knack for handling difficult or aggressive animals. They don't do x-rays or surgery, but these busy ladies offer just about everything else, including annual check-ups, preventive care, vaccines, blood work, minor medical treatment, and feline dentals without anaesthesia. Rennings, who's been training dogs since the age of 10, also helps with behavior modification.

Not all of her clients have triplets or a house full of furry friends, but they face plenty of other challenges. They have antisocial pets that hate waiting rooms, cats that disappear at the site of their carrying case, and 225-pound dogs that are too sick to get out of bed. Others are simply tired of dragging their pet

## ...is a Vet with Drive

scratching and barking to that place they most dread.

The service is especially helpful for busy parents, seniors, the homebound, and multiple pet owners.

For Kathy Tinius of Silver Spring, putting her menagerie of two dogs and two cats into one car is unthinkable. Brittney, Scooter, Wednesday, and Archie may be lovely animals, but not when they're all crammed together. In fact, when Tinius first became a client of Rennings's nine years ago, she had three dogs and four cats. Taking her pets for an annual check-up was a three-week ordeal of schedule shifting that sometimes involved four separate trips.

As soon as she heard about a mobile practice, it seemed like the perfect solution, and Rennings's bedside manner only sweetened the deal.

"She was just so caring and so gentle.... And I like her philosophy. She's much more towards the natural food and natural treatments," said Tinius, adding that Rennings helped her find better choices for her pets' diet as well as flea prevention.

Rennings was also there when it was time for Tinius to put down several of her pets, both dogs and cats. Home Veterinary Service offers at-home euthanasia, which many clients find to be a blessing during difficult times.

"They can be in their own beds. It's an incredible relief. They don't get upset," explained Tinius. "In a hospital, especially with a dog, they're much more aware of what's going on ... they're afraid when they go."

Rennings added that for many people, it helps to have the experience in private, where they can be more open about their grief.

What Rennings and Brown find most rewarding is getting to know their patients and working first-hand with people and the animals they love.

"It's so personal. We take a lot more time. It's like you're a guest in their home instead of a business-like atmosphere," said Rennings. "I just love connecting with people."

To reach Carin Rennings's Home Veterinary Service, please call (410) 461-9969.