

## Welcome to Starlight Pet Talk

**Announcer:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the Starlight Pet Talk Podcast, where we'll talk about and explore ways to help pet parents and future pet parents Learn everything they need to know. Do you have a happy and healthy relationship with their pet. On this podcast, you'll learn from rescue experts, adopters, veterinarians, groomers, and trainers, and uncover all aspects and experiences of adopting and caring.

Your host is a pet rescuer, professional, speaker and writer for Pet Age Magazine and the president and founder of Starlight Outreach and Rescue. So, sit up and stay for Starlight Pet Talk Rescue Adoption and Pet Parenting done right.

**Amy Castro:** Welcome to the Starlight Pet Talk podcast. I'm your host, Amy Castro, and in this episode today, we are gonna share why we're doing this podcast, what we hope to accomplish with it moving forward, and how you, as our listeners, can not only benefit [00:01:00] from the podcast, but even get involved with it.

So, to help us get started, I invited my best friend since I've been in seventh grade Bev Brooks, to. Act as my co-host today. And the reason for that is everything that I read about starting a podcast said that you should start off talking about yourself and a little bit about your background so that your listeners and followers can get to know you.

And I figured, hmm, who could I trust? Not to say embarrassing things about me on a podcast. And so, I thought, well, Bev Brooks, my best decent seventh grade. She's probably somebody that's fairly trustworthy. Maybe not. But anyway, we'll see what she has to say about us. So, she's going to help by asking questions to get to know a little bit about me, about the podcast, and about her as well, because she's kind of an integral part in why I'm even sitting here at this moment.

So, Bev, no, no pressure. No pressure. Yeah. Why don't you go ahead and tell [00:02:00] everybody a little bit about how we met about your involvement with animals over the years and how you became involved with this podcast today.

Yeah, no

**Bev Brooks:** pressure. First podcast ever,

**Amy Castro:** but yeah,

**Bev Brooks:** me too. It's ok.

All right. So yeah, we've, we've been friends for such a long time now. She, like she has said to me before that we're like sisters and we grew up together in New York. In a little tiny town called Valley Cottage and of course being young girls that we are living in suburbia, we're all horse crazy and had to have horses.

So, the only way that was gonna happen was getting involved in four H, which is a rockstar kind of group. Teaches kids responsibility, getting involved in community. Public speaking is part of it. And just, you know, being an all-around good egg basically. So, we got involved with the horses and horse shows and things like that and it kind of took off from there, uh, even to the point where we got involved in colonial reenactments.

Um,

**Bev Brooks:** something that I am very proud of, she is very proud of. Oh, [00:03:00] It's awesome. A friend of ours was involved in colonial reenactments. My mom was always involved in, uh, American history and they said, Hey, you got a horse? Bring the horse over. It'll be great for, uh, for atmosphere and the campsites and everything.

So, we got involved in that too. And, and the horses was just, you know, all horses all the time, 24-7, as you can imagine, being young girls, like I said, in, uh, suburbia of New York State, and it went from there and we just remained friends ever since then, even though, you know, college took us one way and military career took us another way.

And, um, we just remained in friends over, over the years. You know, one of those, one of the good ones that stuck around.

**Amy Castro:** Yeah. Yeah. How, how many years has it been? I don't know, like at least 40.,

**Bev Brooks:** I'm not that old.

**Amy Castro:** Yeah. Okay., whatever. All right. Moving right along then we, we won't start talking about age. So, what is your involvement with animals in Yes.

In this day, in our current day? Yeah.

**Bev Brooks:** So, I [00:04:00] mean, I had a career in 9 1 1 dispatching, which was never on my radar, but it was something I got involved in and became very passionate with. Retired after 30 years. Clarkstown police, rock on, and um, as luck would have it, you know, you kind of always go back to your roots and animals were always part of my life growing up, part of my passion.

And after I retired, I figured I wanted to kind of give back a little bit and I got involved in a wildlife rehabilitation rescue up on Cape Cod where I live now. Called Wild Care of East Ham. And I had gone wild.

**Amy Castro:** Yeah.,

**Bev Brooks:** we'll put a link up and you can, uh, check 'em out. They're, they're awesome. I had gone to a, uh, a fall festival up there in the first summer after I retired and they had a booth set up, you know, selling all sort of stuff.

And I saw this cool sweatshirt and had this really awesome picture of an osprey that they had rehabbed and released and they put a picture of it on a sweatshirt. I'm like, I want that sweatshirt so bad. And it was 50 bucks. So, I had 48 on me. [00:05:00] and I gave 'em 48 bucks. And I said, oh, no, I, I, I can't buy this.

And they're like, no, it's a donation. It's a donation. So, a couple days later, I just, it was tearing me up that I still owed them \$2. So, I go over to the place and I'm like, I feel bad. I owe you \$2. And one thing led to another. I filled out an application to volunteer. I'm, like I said, coming from dispatching, I'm like, I don't want to answer the phone.

I want no responsibility. I just want to like, be behind the scene, stock your shelves, do your dishes, whatever. They're like, you're.. So, I've been there, well, because of Covid, they kind of closed it for a little bit for volunteers to come in. But about four years I've been doing it since pretty much I retired.

And it's, it's wonderful you get to see all sorts of wildlife, um, that I never thought I'd see before. Watch 'em get rehabbed, watch 'em get released, and it's just a, a beautiful feeling to be able to participate in something like that. Yep.

**Amy Castro:** Yeah. Well, and it's interesting you say about, washing dishes, doing laundry, things like that.

Because I think sometimes people have a sense of [00:06:00] if they're gonna volunteer with animals, like, I'm gonna go volunteer at the zoo. I'm gonna go volunteer at wildlife rehab, I'm gonna volunteer at this animal rescue. And it's

all gonna be playing with animals, cuddling kittens, you know, uh, giving. Ducks baths, whatever it might be.

But in fact, a lot of it is just dirty cleaning work. But that's what's essential to keep rescues running. Right? So, it's not the glamorous world that we sometimes think it might be not at all.

**Bev Brooks:** And both of us coming from mucking horse stalls, dirt means nothing to us. You know, Amy can go from crawling around in the mud, trying to pull up a, a wire out of the ground that's gonna harm an animal to next thing you know she's on a plane going somewhere to a conference in a business suit.

It's, it's really kind of,

**Amy Castro:** Yep. I, you've got to clean up sometimes, even though I like the muck, I like being in the muck better than, uh, being in a, any, anything that even resembles a suit. Um, so I mentioned Starlight Outreach and Rescue, and I'm sure everybody has noticed that we call this the, Starlight Pet Talk podcast.

And I'm gonna share a little bit [00:07:00] more about Starlight Outreach and Rescue and some details. But as you can probably tell, Starlight Outreach and Rescue is an animal rescue. So how did you get involved? The rescue that I am running here in Texas, um,

**Bev Brooks:** you roped me into it.,

**Amy Castro:** is that really the best you could do?

You've had days to think about how you're gonna respond to that question. I'm just kidding. Okay. You're right. I, there is, there is

**Bev Brooks:** nothing I would rather do than to help you. Aw.

**Amy Castro:** Don't start crying.

**Bev Brooks:** See, this is your sisters.,

**Amy Castro:** what you like helping with the animals, and what is, what is it that you do for us at Starlight?

Since you're way up in Cape Cod, what do we have you roped in to do?

**Bev Brooks:** All right. Since I'm physically living in Massachusetts and she's in Texas, I really can't help with mucking. A horse saw that would have to be a really long rake. Yeah. But, um, and not being very computer savvy, they able to explain to me over the phone how to, get the animal's pictures up on the adoption page.

Write a cute little. [00:08:00] Snippet description about them and get them out to be adopted, cuz that's the name of the game. Get these animals adopted and get 'em out. Um, so I'm able to do a little bit of computer work for them remotely. I don't have to be in Texas to do that. So, yeah, that's, uh, very easy to do, very quick.

And um, it takes some of the tedium out of what they have to do and prioritize is what they

**Amy Castro:** do. Yeah, it gives us time to do the hands-on stuff instead of the computer stuff. Right? And that, and that's something that, you know, um, part of this podcast we'll be talking about adoption and rescue and things like that.

But at the same time, you know, oftentimes people will ask, well, how can I get involved? Or, what if I can't, um, wrangle a dog or a horse or whatever it might be, and, you know, just get in touch with your local rescue groups. Or you could even get in touch with one across the country, because there's probably always something that you can do even from home.

So, kind of keep that in mind as we, as we kind of get into the podcast more and start talking about rescue. You know, if it's something that's, that sounds even just vaguely of interest, check it out and see, [00:09:00] find out a little bit more about it. All right, so on that note, Bev, what questions do you think people might want to know about either me or the podcast or the rescue?

Right. And I'll respond to those as best I can. Absolutely.

**Bev Brooks:** So y'all heard how I got involved in my own little, uh, assisting an animal rescue up on, on Cape Cod, but how did you get involved in

**Amy Castro:** animal rescue? So, I started off, I mean, I've always been., you know, somebody that is picking up strays, at least as a kid, I actually, and, and I, I have sort of a funny but quick story about my very first pet as a child and it was a cat named Snippy.

And this cat came, my, my dad's business partner brought this cat. It was feral, okay? Very feral cat from New York City in a carrier on a train out to our. And that cat was so mean. I mean, that cat did not have a good day if he wasn't biting or scratching me in some way because I was constantly trying to love on the darn thing, and it wanted [00:10:00] nothing, nothing whatsoever to do with me.

But, um, Still loved him anyway. And so always was kind of looking for the underdog or looking for the unwanted animal and trying to, uh, you know, either give it a home or find it a home or help it find its way back home if it was lost. And that's something that evolved, you know, as, as life went on, you get busy, you're working a job, you don't really have time to do some of that stuff.

But then at one point, um, probably about 10, 12 years, the city I was living in at the time, built an animal shelter, literally walking distance, like across the street from my house. And so, I figured, okay, I have no excuse about not getting involved in helping animals now that there's a shelter literally across the street.

So, I volunteered there for about 10 years, and during that time I realized that, and this is something everybody should really know about their local municipal shelters, your city shelters, and your animal controls, is that, they are oftentimes very limited in what they're able to do to help animals. They don't have [00:11:00] huge budgets to spend on medical care and things like that.

So that's why, people that are so worried about animals being euthanized, you know, a hundred dollars could make the difference between life and death. That a city doesn't have a budget to, give an animal some medication or to get it a simple surgery or something like that. So, I realized that, you know, the city can't fundraise.

They can't ask people to donate money, so, I figured, okay, if I start an animal foundation of some kind, then we can fundraise and help some of these shelter animals. So, it sort of, sort of started off like that. But then it grew and expanded into, not only doing that but actually doing real rescue stuff.

And just to put a plug for the rescue and how we started, the reason we called it Starlight Outreach and Rescue. And the reason that this podcast is called the Starlight Pet Talk Podcast is the trigger to actually. Turned from, eh, just doing some stuff on the side into a nonprofit organization came from sadly the, the passing of one of the [00:12:00] one of the people that volunteered with me.

It was a 14-year-old girl named Emma. Her middle name was Starlight Hyde, and when she passed away in October of 2017, it was like a light bulb and off in my head that I knew not only did I have to, I mean I, it was. Bizarre how not only did I know I had to start a rescue; I knew exactly what I wanted to call it.

Mm-hmm., I knew exactly what I wanted the logo to look like. And it just took off. I mean, we were incorporated and had our 501 status by December. That's how fast it all happened. Once the, once the impetus. Kicked everything off. So, that's how we got rolling.

And it's just grown for good or for bad from there. So, what, what

**Bev Brooks:** is, what does Starlight actually do? What does Starlight, uh, outreach and rescue really do?

**Amy Castro:** So, you know, there's a reason I call it an outreach and a rescue as opposed to just Starlight Rescue. So, we do outreach to shelters, so we continue to support area shelters.

As a matter of fact, today we just took a huge carload of dog food to a local area. A local [00:13:00] area shelter. Um, and we also help with medical cases if we see, yeah, if we see a medical, uh, that they post online for help with a medical case, we'll donate towards that. Sometimes we will also outreach from the standpoint of pulling animals from shelters.

We've got a dog with us now named Gary. And, you know, he's, he's a goofball, but he was pulled from a shelter because they were completely full. They didn't have room to bring one more animal in. And just so you know, you know, when shelters get full, they can't just close their doors. If, if they're a municipal shelter, they still have to pick up those strays roam in the streets.

And so in order to make room, somebody either needs to adopt them, a rescue needs to pull them. Or they get euthanized. And so we pulled Gary from the shelter. So, we do outreach from that standpoint. And then, you know, the rescue side of things is what you would imagine.

We get a call, we get a, a Facebook notification from somebody who has found a litter of kittens, a dog, an injured dog, an injured puppy, whatever it might be. And we. Mostly [00:14:00] foster based, although we do have an animal rescue ranch, and so we have a little more space. I live here, um, on our seven-acre ranch, but for the most part, the animals live in people's homes.

And so, we'll bring them in, we'll rehabilitate them and then get them adopted. So it's a little, of this and a little of that from the standpoint of. Um, who, who we work with. We also try to do as much education along the way, and that was one of the main reasons that we started this podcast, is we were finding that, people needed more information about what to do when they, everything from what to do when they found a pet to caring for their own pets.

So that's probably more than you wanted to know. Did that answer your question? Well,

**Bev Brooks:** no, I, I was gonna ask you, like, I was gonna ask you how you went from just doing the, uh, the outreach program and shelter rescue to the podcast, but I guess. Facilitates getting the word out. I myself did not realize what, uh, a rescue entails and how little I knew about it.

So, a podcast was a great way to.

**Amy Castro:** Yes. And, and, what I'm finding as people come to our rescue [00:15:00] to adopt pets is that despite the fact that there is, uh, an enormous amount of information on the internet about, you know, what to do when you bring home a new puppy, uh, what to do when you bring home a new kitten, whether you should adopt a senior dog or not, for some reason, people aren't getting that, getting that information like they should or they're not getting.

Questions answered. And so, we get tons of questions from people that are, even if they're not looking to turn an animal into us or even adopt an animal, sometimes they just call and ask questions. And so, we thought that the podcast would be a great way to say, Hey, every week we're gonna talk about something that's related to, either, adoption and rescue.

Bringing home a pet for the first time is another major category that we want to cover. Grooming, training, and healthcare are also categories we want to cover. Uh, we'll talk about the human animal bond. One of our, our upcoming, special guest is an expert in. Grief and loss, and she focuses specifically on pet loss.

And because a lot of people struggle when [00:16:00] there, you know, when their pet passes away. You know, people are kind of across the board as to how they respond to that. Some people are able to run right out and just get another cat, and they're, they're happy and that allows them to focus and other people really struggle with the grief.



So, we're gonna talk about that. and then we're gonna, we'll even talk about animal related careers that people might be interested in pursuing. So, many of these things are driven by questions that have people have asked us over the years. So, we do hope, the concept of get involved in the podcast is, you know, hey, if you are an expert on something and you feel like whatever it is, your expertise is, would benefit our listeners, then get in touch and we will try to get you on the podcast.

If you have a question as a pet owner or you know, or somebody that's considering getting a pet, send it into us and we will, do an episode on it. That's great. And even if you're

**Bev Brooks:** not an expert, you might know somebody who is, or you know, a couple times removed, just get the word out, you know, that'd be great.

Yeah. Yeah. So can people, um, actually reach out on the podcast directly or do they have to [00:17:00] call you? Or how do they, how do they get their ideas?

**Amy Castro:** We do have a website, um, which is starlight pet talk.com. And so, there's a contact form on there. Uh, there's also, we also have a Starlight Pet Talk Facebook page, so you can reach out to us, um, through the Facebook page, through a message or a comment on one of our, One of our posts. So, there's multiple different ways to, to get in touch with us. So, along that same note of, of taking input from listeners about what they want to know about, one of the things that we're gonna try to do for every episode is to have a listener question of the week or of the day, or how, however you want to refer to it.

So, I actually have started reaching out to people, um, through our Facebook page to say, hey, what questions do you want to answer? And the very first person who posted on our Facebook page was b uh, Robbie Petit. And Robbie asked, Tips for new dogs, how to teach them not to jump on people specifically. So, we're definitely gonna be talking about pet training and dealing with some of the behavioral issues that people deal with.

[00:18:00] But I thought I would just go ahead and, and drop a little bit of advice that I have learned through my many years of working with animals from trainers. And there's, there's many different ways that people approach, solving problems with pets, but two of the ones that I have found that have been really helpful for not, for basically teaching a dog not to jump on you.

, one method involves putting the dog on a leash, tying the leash to, it could be a doorknob, but just be securing the other end of the leash and just letting the dog

stand there, and walking away. So, you. Let's say you walk 10 feet away from the dog. Don't make eye contact, but maybe watch them out of the corner of your eye.

And when the dog settles down and sits, you turn around and approach the dog. If you take two steps and the dog stands up, you turn around and you go back to where you started from and you wait. And eventually by playing that, Game of going, I'm not going to come over and pet you or give you attention until you sit.

That's one way that a dog can learn not to jump on people. So that's one approach. Another approach that I learned from another [00:19:00] trainer was if it's an issue where your dog might jump on people. When they come to the door for the first time, it gets very excited. Again, a leash obviously always helps, but distracting the animal with treats can also help.

So rather than being so excited about that person that's coming in the door and wanting to jump on them, if you're dropping treats on the floor while people are coming in the door, assuming your dog's food motivated, that's a whole other ball of wax. We'll talk about that more, but. Many dogs are food motivated, then that's a distraction.

It keeps them focused and keeps all four feet on the ground, which is, which is the goal, at least one of the primary goals. So thank you Robbie, for that question, and we will try to include questions for every, every episode. So, Bev, as we kind of wrap up this inaugural episode here, you're a pet owner, what do you see as being the benefit or at least just one benefit of a podcast like our Starlight Pet Talk podcast?

**Bev Brooks:** Just when you mentioned the dog greeting at the door, that's always a huge issue. You see it time and time again that people have a hard time with [00:20:00] that. So, by you saying, uh, even just throwing a treat on the floor, I never thought of that, or, uh, securing the leash, I never thought of that either.

It's always like, no, no, down, down. Um, these are great suggestions. Whether out of frustration or laziness or just, I don't know what else to do, my neighbor says to do this and it's not working. Podcast is a great way to pick up other ideas. And the beauty of it is that there's gonna be a bunch of other people who have the same problem jumping up, or barking at certain things they're not supposed to bark at or whatever.

It's gonna be very constructive to get, a cornucopia of solutions to one simple problem because not every dog is the same. And one solution might be fine for your neighbor's dog, but not. So, yeah, it's a great way to get other ideas.

**Amy Castro:** Yeah, exactly. And I think, by doing this in a podcast, I mean, like you said, you ask your neighbor or even you ask your own vet for behavioral advice or you ask a trainer, the benefit of this podcast is we can get people from anywhere, to give that expert advice.

And that's, that's one of our goals. It's not just [00:21:00] gonna be, a layperson's advice, but we are gonna have experts on various topics on this podcast to. To give input so that at minimum, right, you can compare and contrast that advice to what you've received from the expert that you have consulted with and see what works best for your pet.

Right? Okay. So, I think you now probably have a pretty good idea of who we are and what this podcast is going to be about, but ultimately, you're going to determine the content and direction of this podcast. So, make sure you get those questions in, make sure you share the problems and challenges that you're facing, because our number one goal is to ensure that you and your pet have.

And harmonious life, and that your pet stays with you throughout his or her lifetime. So, thank you so much for listening, and be sure to tune in to the next episode of Starlight Pet Talk.

**Announcer:** You've been listening to the Starlight Pet Talk podcast. We're glad you joined us to gain new insight on the many loving ways to adopt and care for your pets.

Be sure to s. So, you'll never miss an episode. And if you want [00:22:00] more information, go to [starlight pet talk.com](http://starlightpettalk.com) because your pet can't talk. Be sure to join us next time for Starlight Pet Talk.