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Interviews: Contact Allison Hedrick
(Press photos available)



MEDIA CONTACT: Allison Alvarez Hedrick
Vice President of Communications
P: 800.354.9338 ext. 2240
E: ahedrick@wedu.org

WEDU's Nature Shares Stories of Local Animals Getting a New Lease on Life when *My Bionic Pet* airs Wednesday, April 9, 2014 at 8 p.m.

*The use of animal prosthetics is on the rise as two local pets show
quality of life is possible for pets with limited mobility*



Portrait of Jennifer Robinson and
Journey the dog, Tampa, FL.

Photo Courtesy: Kevin Bachar

Tampa, FL — Animals that have met with misfortune, whether from a birth defect, accident, disease or even human cruelty, are now getting a second chance at life due to human intervention and technological advances. Left disabled without limbs, fins, flippers, beaks or tails, these creatures face a grim future, if one at all. But innovative prosthetics can change those survival odds if someone comes to their rescue.

Nature profiles these animals, their rescuers and the individuals whose work has transformed their lives when ***My Bionic Pet*** airs **Wednesday, April 9 at 8 p.m.** on **WEDU PBS**. After the broadcast, the episode will be available for online streaming at

<http://video.wedu.org/>.

My Bionic Pet shows that while animal prosthetics are sometimes later retrofitted for human needs, engineers most often adapt human technologies to an animal's anatomy. Westcoast Brace & Limb in **Tampa, Florida**, made its first brace for a dog named Journey, a golden retriever born without his front left paw.

Jennifer Robinson, until recently the patient program director at Westcoast, and born with a limb

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deficiency of both legs, has a close bond with him. She often worked with Journey, a certified therapy dog, helping amputees adjust to life with prosthetics. The dog has also become a favorite visitor to patients at St. Joseph's Children Hospital, as well as veterans and the elderly.

The fabrication and subsequent operation to attach artificial limbs can be expensive, but as **My Bionic Pet** explains, a number of people have volunteered to assume the costs — sometimes with fundraising support — and even care of these disabled animals. Los Angeles area friends Kathy Wyer and Elodie Lorenz decided to co-foster Roofus, a blind golden retriever with deformed front legs, and arrange for specialized prosthetics that allow him to walk with all four legs. Likewise, Tara Bayne and Devin Napier from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, became owners of Driftwood, a border collie puppy born with both rear feet missing. **Nature** follows Driftwood's surgery and subsequent first steps on his new artificial hind feet.

The documentary notes that it's often a matter of trial and error before a solution is reached. It was a team effort by Phoenix's Core Institute and Midwestern University professor Justin Georgi to design a replacement rubber tail for Mr. Stubbs, an alligator whose appendage was bitten off by a larger gator. Other stories include replacing part of a swan's deformed beak so he can preen and eat properly at the Carolina Waterfowl Rescue in Indian Trail, North Carolina; and providing Molly, an injured pony, with a new prosthetic leg so she can serve as a therapy animal around the New Orleans area.

Not every disability requires a high-tech solution. When a piglet, born with deformed, unusable back legs, was brought to veterinarian Dr. Len Lucero's clinic to be euthanized, the Florida vet offered to take care of him. Dr. Lucero built a wheeled harness from some of his son's old toys so newly named pet Chris P. Bacon could move around. The porcine pet has since graduated to a wheelchair originally built for dogs, having outgrown his first homemade device.

ABOUT THINK WEDNESDAY

"My Bionic Pet" is part of PBS' new "Think Wednesday" programming lineup of television's best science, nature and technology programming that includes the acclaimed series *Nature* and NOVA, the highest-rated nature and science series on television, coupled with new special programming at 10 p.m. Wednesday nights on PBS offer new perspectives on life in the universe and keep viewers both curious and wanting more.

ABOUT NATURE

Support for this *Nature* program was made possible in part by the Arnhold Family in memory of Clarisse Arnhold, the Lillian Goldman Charitable Trust, the Filomen M. D'Agostino Foundation, by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and by the nation's public television stations.

ABOUT WEDU PBS

WEDU PBS is West Central Florida's primary PBS station and public media company reaching 16 counties through media platforms including on-air programming and online experiences that broaden horizons, transport and transform and open gateways to new ideas and new worlds. Financially supported by the community, the organization offers a wealth of award-winning inspirational, educational and enlightening content over a variety of media platforms including: television programming, station's website, www.wedu.org and various social media platforms, monthly member magazine *Premiere*, educational outreach activities and a myriad of special events. WEDU's focus on the local community has resulted in the station being regarded as a beacon of trust for men, women and children of every walk of life no matter their age, ethnicity or socio-economic status. WEDU is a treasured community resource; a window to the world for the homebound and a vital educational source for the youngest members of society. WEDU prides itself on its position in the Tampa Bay community as a leader, partner, informed citizen and a member of PBS, the most trusted institution in America (ORC International's DualFrame CARAVAN, January 2014). For more information, program schedules or to support WEDU PBS, visit www.wedu.org, WEDU Public Media on Facebook and Twitter or call 813.254.9338.

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