

CommunityCatsPodcast_Ep433_Roy_211207.mp3

Link

Kristen Petrie [00:00:03]

You've tuned in to the Community Cats Podcast. Ready? Let's go.

Stacy LeBaron [00:00:13]

Welcome to the Community Cats Podcast. I am your host, Stacy LeBaron. I've been involved helping homeless cats for over 20 years with the Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society. The goal of this podcast is to expose you to amazing people who are improving the lives of cats. I hope these interviews will help you learn how you can turn your passion for cats into action. And today, I'm so excited. We're speaking with Chris Roy. Great friend, and I'm just so thrilled to have him here to be part of the show. Chris is a technology guy in his day job and used his experience to create [Doobert.com](https://doobert.com), which is an online software platform, custom-built for animal rescuers. It's like a combination of Match.com specifically for animal shelters and rescues to find new partners. And then a volunteer Uber for getting the animals where they need to go. Chris and Joyce, helping provide technology solutions to some of the biggest challenges in animal rescue and is always looking for new ways to help animals. And the people that care for them. Chris is supported by his amazing wife, Daphne; and together they have five fur kids, four cats and one dog. Chris, welcome to the show.

Chris Roy [00:01:18]

Thanks, Stacy, good to be back.

Stacy LeBaron [00:01:20]

Yeah. It's so great to see you and I love that cat to dog ratio. It's perfect.

Chris Roy [00:01:24]

Great.

Stacy LeBaron [00:01:27]

So, tell me, for the folks that haven't heard one of our past episodes. It's been, we were trying to think, maybe almost a couple years now since we last chatted, you know, why are you so passionate about cats?

Chris Roy [00:01:39]

So, probably the number one question people always ask me is where did the name Doobert come from? And Doobert actually, was my cat. And that's really where my passion for cats started. So I, you know, like a lot of people once I graduated from college and got on my own, wanted some pets, but having a dog is hard when you're working all day. So got one cat, and then got a second cat and Doober was just an old soul. He was he was a fine cat and just a snuggler, right? And he became the inspiration when I was pulling together the ideas for the software what to do, naming it as always one of those things and you spend all these hours and finally I was just like, you know, why not name it? Doobert in memory of him. So if you go to the site and under the about, you can actually see Doobert the cat. He's no longer with us. He was an orange and white Tabby, but you can read a little bit about his story.

Stacy LeBaron [00:02:28]

That's great. So when I first met you, I understood Doobert to be pretty much of a site where you know, somebody wanted to transport dogs from the south to the north and they needed to do sort of this traveling train of volunteers. So I like I'll meet you at the Walmart parking lot and then I'll meet you at Target and meet you at Shaw's or whatever, you were the way of like patching that whole transport path together, and it was really originally, I think focused with with dogs and not only cars but also planes, right?

Chris Roy [00:02:59]

Yep. Yeah, that's how I got into it. It was funny when I originally started the idea of Doobert. It was to organize my own flights. So, I'm a pilot, you know, on the weekends one of my other passions and it got to the point of I was doing so many rescues I couldn't remember which animal, which day, which airport and I'm like, I just need to build a system for this and people said, oh, this is really cool. Could you make it available to the drivers? I'm like why? I don't understand like what do the drivers needed do and it was part of my diving into it really. Understand the problems of animal welfare, and so to your point. We started with the rescue relay transport and I'm still proud to say seven years later, it's the only system that actually supports these. So, it'll break it into the legs for you automatically notify the, we have now over, 32,000 Doobert tiers, across the country. So it does all that for you. And now, there's all sorts of other functionality such as we've got local rides. And now we've

got a high-volume transport module. And as you said, it works for drivers and pilots. And last year with COVID, we rolled out a fostering module and so it's it's been my passion to really try and you know me, Stacy, I don't go after the easiest things. I take the hardest problems in like no, we're going to fix this because nobody else was focused on those things.

Stacy LeBaron [00:04:16]

Right? So you're saying you add these modules and I think there's also a volunteering component in there too. And one point in time, you had a photography one too, right? Where if people were interested in volunteering their services and taking pictures, and that kind of stuff. So how do all these pieces all work together in one unit? We all sign in just to one section and then it funnels out from there. Is that how it goes?

Chris Roy [00:04:40]

Yes. It's um it's complicated right? The technology architecture is complicated in simple of the same time, right? So when you go to Doobert, there's a big sign-up button and you click sign up and it will say just you, or your organization. So, if it's just you it'll facilitate you through creating whichever profiles you want. So, as you mentioned, you could be a transporter and then there's different types of transporters. You can be a foster home, and you can choose the types of animals you can foster. You could be a photographer, an in-person volunteer, virtual volunteer. There's all these different profiles that you as a volunteer can choose to fill out and then as an organization, we do run them through a checking process to make sure they're a legitimate organization, but then, you know, think about like in any Google being a good example, right? You've got all your little Google Apps and different modules within there. Same in Doobert, there's just different buttons that you're clicking on to go to the transport section or go to the fostering section, or, you know, anything else like that. So, it's pretty easy to move from kind of area to area. And the great thing is all, it's all integrated, right? So you don't have to go out over to this system for this and over to that system for that. Once you login to Doobert, you have access to all of the stuff in one place.

Stacy LeBaron [00:05:52]

Wow, that's great. It's fantastic. I just want to reiterate this. You don't have to be part of an organization to be part of Doobert right? You can be an individual. Could you be a person who rescued a litter of kittens and needs to connect in some way. Is that a roll?

Chris Roy [00:06:07]

So probably not that exact specific role. So we only, so you can be a volunteer or part of an organization. And the reason we do that is we didn't want just anybody to be able to post transports or post requests. It gets noisy with too many things like that. So, you do have to be an organization in order to post, say request, whether it's creating a transport, or a fostering request, or any of those other types of things.

Stacy LeBaron [00:06:31]

If you are an individual, though, that's not affiliated, is there a way to be able to connect with an organization that's local to you?

Chris Roy [00:06:39]

Yeah, absolutely. So, we've got a nice map where you can find organizations and you can drill down. You can either click down, you can drill down by, you know, state and city, and all those other things, so that you can find an organization that you can work for. And then those organizations as well, can find you, as a volunteer. So we've tried to, I try to make it a two-sided platform because there's so many organizations that yeah, they might have some volunteers but they can always use more or if they're doing a transport and they're based out of Wisconsin, but they don't have volunteers in Illinois or Iowa, or somewhere else, so every volunteer is essentially they made available to every organization in the Doobert system,

Stacy LeBaron [00:07:20]

Right? So it is December. It's a holiday time here and in the month of December, we're going to be focusing on animal welfare podcasters. Which you are one of them, along with me and there'll be several others profiled this month. Tell us a little bit about your podcast.

Chris Roy [00:07:36]

Yeah. So podcasting is, you know, I mean I learned from you Stacy, you were my inspiration to get into this and did a number of different podcasts over the years and

about a year ago, so it was hard to believe it's been going for about a year, we launched the Animal Innovation Show and the idea was to take a different tact. Instead of just saying, let's focus on the rescuer, the shelter, and the programs they are doing, but expand it; to say what does innovation do? What is innovation being what does it mean for animals and how can people be helping them? So I always say we focus on the people, the products, the services, or even just the ideas that are helping people to help animals and we took a different approach. Instead of just a podcast. We decided to record it as video and really try and take advantage of live streaming video and you know videos on like Instagram, IGTV. And we still do a podcast for it so you can still get it on the podcast, but we tried to step it up a little bit, to make it a little bit more interactive. And it's really been fascinating the way that people interpret innovative, right? So, I mean, my question, just like, you have your question to start your show. I always ask them to tell us who they are, and how they're innovating and helping animals. And the way that people answer that I should in the direction they take, it is just really fascinating to see and I'm hopeful that we're going to inspire the next generation of idea people to say, you know, I've always had this idea for this, you know. Come on the show, right? That's what I always say, come on the show, let's talk about it because there's probably somebody that's listening or watching and goes, you know what I can make that I can make that a reality.

Stacy LeBaron [00:09:08]

And I will say that there are definitely, there are some organizations and businesses out there that aren't necessarily a nonprofit organization that are innovating and helping in the animal welfare space. I know Amy Saner No, has talked about developing a spay neuter clinic model that's not necessarily a non-profit model, but yet it is able to assist folks in the community. So that's that's one example of one of the things that I know that I'm very excited to see how it develops and takes shape over time. Are there other types of innovations that you've seen that you've interviewed that are kind of keen, and interesting?

Chris Roy [00:09:46]

Yeah, I think Waggle is another great example of a different different kind of fundraising platform and, and that they're directly paying the vets, right? So they're trying to solve that challenge, as we know, vet care for care for our animals is really

expensive and they're trying to provide that resource. And I love the way you say to that, because I always approach it the same way. It doesn't have to be nonprofit. It's just is it innovative? Is it helping people that are caring for the animals? And that's what we're trying to do is to raise awareness to those types of things. So that somebody goes, A, I didn't know that existed or B, I've always had this idea that, you know, this is how we could help community cats. You know, how can we make that idea into reality?

Stacy LeBaron [00:10:28]

Right? Right, and there are so many of us that, you know, feel like we have to do everything for free, right? And yet, you know, there really are opportunities out there that can help a larger group of cats in our community if you are doing something with a business model, so you shouldn't just take it off the table and say oh no one's ever going to want to pay me for this because people in Texas, there's some trappers in Texas that are paid to trap community cats to bring them to the spay/neuter clinic and they're trapping hundreds to thousands of them and that's their full-time job. And they're making a living out of it. So you can and they're doing a good thing for the cats are getting them into the clinic that getting them, spayed, and neutered. And so, there are ways to be able to help community cats, you know, in a way where you may think you're getting, you're taking advantage, but you're not. It's just this whole mentality. This nonprofit mentality of meaning, no money, and it doesn't mean no money. It just means that, you know, we don't have to pay taxes on our profits. Basically, is that that's saying so.

Chris Roy [00:11:27]

I'm so glad you bring that up because that's the passion of mine as well, Stacy that people think nonprofit means you don't have any money in the bank at the end of the year. And that couldn't be further from the truth. There's non priming take Goodwill Industries as a great example. They bring in hundreds of millions of dollars across all of their different stores, but they've created such a great model that they're making, you know, resale, a thrift store and they use that to further their mission and they are a nonprofit, meaning there's no individual that's pulling money out and benefiting, but of course, they have employees and they're doing marketing and all these other types of promotions. And I think we have as in animal welfare need to think about that same ways to say, listen, just the example, you gave they're trapping, they're

having these animals spayed and neutered, which is exactly what we want. So what so they're making a living on it. That's that's great. They're providing a valuable service and at the end of the day, what's there's really not an issue with that. So I always encourage people to think about what is your long-term model, right? The more or you know sustainable revenue that you have coming in the more you're going to build to expand your programs. So instead of just waiting for the annual donations, right? You're hitting everybody up at Christmas and say give us money to get us money. You know, what's your model? Is there a service or value-added? Something that you can provide even as a non-profit? One of the crazy things people don't always realize a non-profit can own a for-profit, just doesn't work the other way around, right? So, if you've got a model that works and you're selling services, selling goods, whatever. That's ultimately going to bring money back to your mission, which is what you're trying to do. And at the end of the day, it's totally fine with the IRS. They just want to know where the money's coming from. And where is it going to.

Stacy LeBaron [00:13:09]

Right. And if you do have like a thrift store or some sort of a shop or whatever and it is deemed to be a taxable entity. You just have to pay taxes on that part of it and then the prophets get rolled over into the nonprofit. So you do have to do it like a second set of books. So it does get, it gets complicated. But there are definitely thrift stores out there that are making really a significant amount of money during the course.

Chris Roy [00:13:33]

And it helps to further their mission, right? I mean, that's what we're in this for. We're trying to do more for the animals. When I developed the concept for Doobert. I mean, I was, as I said, I was flying animals around and I probably have transported thousands of them on my own, but we've now done more than 12,000 animal transports in the Doobert system. So by focusing on technology, it scales better. We can do much more and same concept or that if you have more money and you can scale your program, or hire people or, you know, market the program, you're actually going to be doing way more good than if you're just kind of limping along or scrimping up the money that you can save. So really step back and think about strategically, how do we, how do we scale these things? You can make ten times the difference in what you started out with.

Stacy LeBaron [00:14:19]

Right, Right, and that's really important. I mean, we're dealing with veterinary, shortages, vet tech shortages. So we need to utilize our human resources, really really carefully because there's a shortage for in a lot and I, you know, I hear about executive director shortages, or, you know, an organization hiring people for, you know, cat care positions is really tough too. So there's just, we have to be really good where that we're using our staff efficiently and effectively. You're talking about technology and I want to touch upon. You had refreshed or redesigned your mobile app.

Chris Roy [00:14:56]

Yeah, rebuilt the mobile app from the ground up. So it was just about six and a half years old. And as, you know, technology kind of changes, whereas originally, we had a separate mobile app for the iPhone and for Android. Now, we did a combined app, the call it a hybrid app. So it's one set of code instead of two; a little bit easier to maintain and now we really stepped back and try to say how do we, how do we make those better? How do we build it from the ground up? Like different components of Doobert, it kind of was added onto over the years. And as we're all in a mobile world. Right? Everybody goes and looks for the app first. So we really wanted to focus on how do we make this so easy. So that within your pocket you can just you know, you can do animal rescue things. You can schedule transports. You can text with foster's right through the Doobert system. So we really wanted to make it so that organizations had the power of Doobert and their hand. And so I'm really excited and then we spend a good six months designing and rebuilding and really challenging ourselves to say, what's the best use of this. So that it can have the biggest, you know, the biggest impact. So volunteers of course can come out and they can sign up on their, they can create their different profiles. They can be notified of transports. We've got, we've got our rescue tube functionality, which I think is really cool. It's all about video. And so getting video off of people's phones is the hardest thing to do because after it gets to like a minute or so, they can't text it to you anymore. It's too big. So if you're an organization and you're trying to get volunteers to take video of the animals, particularly cats, you know, an adoption videos going to go so much further when you're sharing it. It looks just a photo of a cat. It looks like every other cat, but when you see them in their playful and they're rolling on their

back or they're you know, acting goofy, you give a potential adopter of viewing to who they are. And so what we did is we made it so that organizations can create a bucket number, is really what it is and then they give that number to anybody. And type it in the Doobert app and start recording video and you can upload videos of pretty much of any length and it goes right back to the organization. So really important components that we wanted to build into the Doobert app to make it really easy to get people focused on the videos because they can really help.

Stacy LeBaron [00:17:12]

Could your Animal Welfare organization, use a tune-up? Humane Network can help. You can get a free 30-minute consultation to talk through your challenges and get ideas on how your organization can be more successful with less stress. From board development and fundraising to strategic planning and operations. Humane Network has got you covered. Whether you are a large or small, nonprofit or government. It's a live and thriving program led by a certified animal behavior consultant features specially designed training for shelter and clinic staff on enrichment, stress reduction, safe animal handling and behavior modification. With Humane Network, you receive individualized advice and support customized to meet your organization's unique needs. And Humane Network can lighten your load by taking on fundraising communications, and other tasks you struggle with. Contact Humane Network today for a free 30-minute consultation visit [Humanenetwork.org](https://humanenetwork.org). That's [Humanenetwork.org](https://humanenetwork.org). Of course, you know that Doobert is the only software that helps you do transport, foster management and fundraising all in one place, but did you know that Doobert has powerful e-commerce capabilities? To let you sell your organization's products? Forget paying for Shopify or trying to list your items on Facebook with your Doobert account you can list your organization's products and even do auctions right from their rescue store module. Doobert manages your orders and all of the money goes directly into your PayPal, making it super easy to manage, check out the Doobert rescue store functionality today at www.doobert.com where they make animal rescue simple.

Stacy LeBaron [00:18:36]

You also had talked about a community case management system. What is that?

Chris Roy [00:18:55]

Yeah. So this is really exciting. So working very closely, the idea came from Dallas Pets Alive, and Spay Neuter Network in Dallas area, and they approached us about 18 months ago and said, hey would we be willing to work with them and collaborate on something that would not only help them. They were really focused on wanting to help other organizations across the country. And when you think about it, one of the problems they deal with is the number of phone calls that come in for wanting to surrender, their animal or, you know, they found a cat, all those other things. How do you how do you keep track of those things? How do you bring the information on the animal. How do you communicate with the client, as they call them? And more importantly, how do you find them solutions? So whether it be other groups that will take them in the area or other groups out of state. So they wanted one place to bring all this together. And so we spent quite a bit of time working through all of the use cases with them and I'm super excited. We just we just launched this a couple months ago. And the idea of the community case managementvis, it can be used for lots of things, but we've got a couple of key components and it's imagine creating a case and now you can send and receive text messages with the client, right through the case. And all of that information is stored. Every email that gets fired off, that is stored. If the person responds, it's all in one place. So now you can designate within your organization, whether you're, you know, an intake organization such as a shelter or the example, we always were using in our design process was Fences for Fighters, right? Like something totally different than an animal shelter. You can use this module because it's so flexible. So any inquiries that come in, you can open up a case. You've got all the information on the person, you can easily communicate through the interface. Like I said, text message, email, and then something I'm really super excited about is we developed some automated workflows. So, you know, you can actually now send a follow-up, you click a button and the system will now send a text message and wait two days and if that doesn't get a response and it will send an email. If it doesn't get a response, it can notify you back and then close the case. And we really wanted to develop these to make it easier, you know, reduce the workload. I think you've heard me say before Stacy, use technology for what it's good for and these mind-numbing, you know, follow-ups and things like that, technology can take that off your plate. So you've got more time to focus on the decision, making things that require a little bit more insights. So the system you can

transfer to the rescue board, right? You just hit transfer and it posts to all of those organizations. There's so many things that we tried to do to really make a powerful module that started with the brains of DPA and SNM. And now we're really excited to be able to offer it to everybody across the country.

Stacy LeBaron [00:21:38]

Wow, that's fantastic. I think that would be very helpful for a lot of organizations. I see a lot of repetition of the same things over and over again and hearing about, oh, we're on the phone all the time. And we have to and you know, the call the calls are coming and the emails are coming. And there's just a lot that could be automated, I think and we repeat ourselves ad nauseam, I mean, the amount of questions that we have the same answers to all the time, you know, we shouldn't have to do that.

Chris Roy [00:22:07]

What we did with that, just as a great example Stacy, we built-in macro so you can create macros or email templates either way. Macros, you just kind of drag and drop and boom it just popped your text in. So just like you would do in your Gmail or other things. You've got that built-in there. You can send an email template, right? So if somebody was calling or inquiring about a community cat, then you can just select that template which you've predefined. It's got your organization logo, all your information. You don't have to, to your point, go cut and paste, retype it. You just go click, click, send. And it's all that, is stored in that one particular case number. So you know what, you send to them, what date, did they reply? Do they, you know, what questions do they ask, who responded to the case, and it's all within the same thing that you're already logging into, right? So it's all a part of Doobert, you go to the transfer tab, you go to the CCM tab, for community case management, one place for everything. So you can do transports, fostering videos and creative case management. Now in one place.

Stacy LeBaron [00:23:05]

Wow, that's just awesome. That just sounds fantastic. We were talking a little bit earlier before we hit the record button about the fact that sort of during COVID, you've noticed a substantial change in the number of cats that are being transported. I would assume up north, but I didn't clarify that. All right, how are you seeing cats moving around the country?

Chris Roy [00:23:26]

Yeah. It's really exciting to see more and more organizations looking to take cats and more organizations sending cats. And that's what's really cool. I'm starting to see more of a trend of cat specific transports, right? I was just talking with a group out of California, Start Rescue, the other day and they're doing once a month, cat only transports going up to the Northwest. We're starting to see more transports going through the system that are volunteer-based, right? So there's rescue relays, but the passengers are cats, so it's really super cool, to see that people are now realizing that you know, the animal population is, it's very centric in certain areas. And all you got to do is think outside the box a little bit. We can move them to areas where they're going to be more likely to be adopted. So people have always used, I would say in the last couple years, they've used transport for the local rides at Doobert. So picking up an animal, take him to the vet or again, picking up spay and neuter animals and taking them in or out, right? From TNR, but now I'm seeing them actually transporting across state lines and in different regions of the country, just is really super cool to see. So I'm excited to see that this is a trend and it's just going to continue to grow.

Stacy LeBaron [00:24:39]

Yeah, I certainly hope so. Based on the things that you've seen in the organizations that you've talked to, you know. What are their thoughts and ideas about trends for cats over the next, I don't know, three to five years or so.

Chris Roy [00:24:51]

Yeah. I think they're all recognizing that not everybody has the exact same problem. Right? So certainly, we know that there's lots of community cats across the country in targeted areas, like where, where you are, Vermont? Massachusetts, those other ones. They've been very specific about eliminating some of the overpopulation through targeted spay and neuter. And I think that trend is catching on and then recognizing that sometimes though, before you can even do that you also need to kind of lower the population in the shelter. So if you use those two in tandem, you lower the ones in the shelter and get them out and transfer to another area. Now you started doing targeted spay and neuter in your area so there's less of them coming in. The people, I talked to all are excited to see that this is happening with cats

instead of it just being dogs, right? So, who knows where is it going to go? I think there's the idea of trap neuter return is very, it's becoming more acceptable. It's talked about it used to be as you know, a very kind of back, you know, behind the building type of thing. And now it's it's more out in the open and it's more of something that people understand this is a targeted way to take care of the animals so it makes sense, right? So I'm excited to see that they're recognizing this, they're seeing the need to transfer the animals and then they're working together to say how do we, how do we focus on an area together? Instead of, you know, everybody just kind of haphazardly, trapping, whatever colonies that can find.

Stacy LeBaron [00:26:13]

That's great before we close out. I want to just have you mention again your podcast because we are profiling podcasters. So share with folks about your podcast where they can download it, where they can see it.

Chris Roy [00:26:27]

Sure. It's called the Animal Innovation Show. And they can pretty much see it anywhere. So it is on all of the podcasting platforms. So you can find it on Spotify and iTunes, and all that. We do twice a week episodes. They are live streamed to YouTube and Facebook, and then we have videos, you know, edited versions that post, all of the platforms, Facebook YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, even. So we've gotten some great followers from LinkedIn. So it's really exciting. It airs, it starts airing, I should say, every Tuesday and Thursday night and then throughout the week, there's different, you know, the videos are going up in different places. So just search for the Animal Innovation Show. If, you know somebody, I always ask people, if you know somebody I should talk to, or have an innovative idea, they can just go to [Innovations.show](https://www.innovations.show) and we've got a nice little submission form they can fill out. Tell us who that person is and we'll reach out and get them on the show and profile. So it's really exciting to see the ideas that people are having.

Stacy LeBaron [00:27:24]

That's great. And if folks are interested in signing up for Doobert, I assume they just go to [Doobert.com](https://www.doobert.com) right?

Chris Roy [00:27:30]

Yeah, it can't be easier than that. You just go to Doobert.com. There's a big, you know, I want to sign up on the homepage and the system is all automated. So if you want to be a volunteer, you can choose how to be a volunteer, parent organization. It'll ask for some information and it'll set up your organization. But yeah, they start there and if they want to get a hold of me, they can just email me at Chris@Doobert.com.

Stacy LeBaron [00:27:52]

That's great. Chris, is there anything else you'd like to share with our listeners today?

Chris Roy [00:27:57]

So I'm super excited personally to see what's going to happen next year. We've come so far and now I feel like there's just this momentum. And I'm really excited to be a part of it. I'm really excited that people are finding new and innovative ways to use technology and that's what it's all about. And I would just encourage people, even if you only have an hour a week or an hour a month, there's something that you can do in this space and regardless of what your background is, your skills, there's a way for you to get involved and we welcome you if you're interested in helping animals and people

Stacy LeBaron [00:28:29]

Great, Chris, thank you so much for being a guest on the show. And I hope we'll have you on again in the future and I'm sure we will.

Chris Roy [00:28:36]

Sounds good. Thanks Stacy.

Kristen Petrie [00:28:36]

That's it for this week. Please head over to Apple Podcasts and leave a review. We love to hear what you think and a five-star review really helps others find the show. You can also join the conversation with listeners, cat caretakers, and me, on Facebook, and Instagram. And don't forget to hit follow or subscribe on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, YouTube, Stitcher, or wherever you listen to podcasts so you don't miss a single show. Thanks for listening, and thank you for everything that you do to help create a safe and healthy world for cats.

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