

# **Riverbend Yoga to Host "Animals as Carriers of Divine Love" Conversation**

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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ALTON - Community members can join a conversation called “Animals as Carriers of Divine Love” on Thursday, April 4, 2024.

From noon to 1 p.m. on Thursday at Riverbend Yoga, Flora Van Koten and Sheila will lead the talk about our relationships with animals and how these relationships are viewed in Eckankar, a new religious movement that promotes connection between souls.

“I believe, and many people do, that animals are soul, too,” Van Koten said. “And we are going to have a discussion about that. The divine kinship is that relationship that we have. You have relationships with your girlfriend, your spouse, your kids. We have relationships with our animals, too. And if we realize their soul, it can go deeper.”

ECKists, the name given to those who practice Eckankar, believe every living being has “soul” and can form relationships. Van Koten and Sheila hope that by sharing stories about animals and their connections to humans, attendees will be able to recognize the divine love that animals contain.

“Relationships, bottom line, are about love, unconditional love. And animals give that in spades,” Van Koten noted. “We can be cross with our animals, but they will come right back. Especially dogs, they wag their tails; even if they’ve been in trouble they still come unconditionally. They know so much about divine love, animals, all animals. Different forms, but all soul.”

Van Koten shared that she has had deep relationships with dogs throughout her life. Sheila currently has a relationship with the birds she feeds every day. These relationships have improved their lives while also giving them a deeper perspective on their own beliefs as ECKists.

Sheila pointed out that seeing all beings as soul can also improve our connections with other people. She hopes that the conversation on April 4 can encourage more people to consider their relationships with one another and the animals in their lives.

“It’s not just animals, you know. When we start to see each other as soul, it makes us not see the knucklehead that’s presenting there, but it lets us see the spark of God that each of us are,” Sheila added. “So I’m a little more patient with the people on the news or the people who drive me crazy.”

During the “Animals as Carriers of Divine Love” conversation on April 4, Van Koten and Sheila will share stories from the book “Animals Are Souls Too!” by ECKist leader Harold Klemp. Attendees will be encouraged to share their own stories about their relationships with animals, and both women look forward to hearing about these connections and how animals show love.

“The energy that animals have, every animal, there’s something about being and sharing these stories,” Van Koten said. “That’s what we’re hoping to do, to help each other recognize that divine source that’s everywhere around us. Not just in animals, in other people, too.”

For more information about animals as soul, Van Koten and Sheila encourage people to visit [www.AnimalsAreSoul.blog](http://www.AnimalsAreSoul.blog). The “Animals as Carriers of Divine Love” conversation is scheduled for 12–1 p.m. on April 4, 2024, at Riverbend Yoga.