

Words from the Author

Schneider, Jessica, Kauline Davis, and Thad Blossom. *How I Became A Scientist: Activity Book for 3rd Graders*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2010.

Kauline Davis, PhD and Sandy Amass, DVM, PhD

The book *How I Became a Scientist* was created out of sheer need! In the United States, there is a need to produce more research scientists and more veterinarians. This book was written to excite third graders about the possibility of a scientific career—specifically, a career as a veterinarian and/or a researcher. *How I Became a Scientist* is part of a larger project funded by the Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA) from the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR), a component of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This larger project, led by the Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine, is called “Fat Dogs and Coughing Horses: Animal Contributions towards a Healthier Citizenry.” This project was designed by an interdisciplinary team of faculty and staff from the Discovery Learning Research Center at Purdue’s Discovery Park, the College of Education, the Agricultural Communication program, the College of Health and Human Sciences, the Science Bound Program, public schools in Indiana, and The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis. The project has four main goals: (1) Accomplish curricular development through partnerships with teachers in the K-12 system; (2) Excite K-12 students about careers in health science; (3) Involve and engage children, their parents, and the general public in educational fitness activities; and (4) produce an interactive traveling exhibit which highlights the science involved in keeping people healthy.

The scientists featured in *How I Became a Scientist* were chosen using a number of factors. Many of the featured scientists are working on research projects funded by NIH. We chose scientists who were racially and ethnically diverse, and who believe that sharing their love for science with children is an important component of encouraging interest in scientific careers. It was also important to us to choose equal numbers of male and female scientists. In many scientific disciplines, males continue to outnumber females in the classrooms, both as students and faculty members, and in the field. The direct opposite is true in veterinary medicine, where more women are entering veterinary medicine than ever before. Veterinary medicine is also one of the least diverse health professions with respect to race and ethnicity. For this book to be effective in America’s increasingly diverse classrooms, we believed it was important for everyone to be able to “see them-

selves” represented among the pages (Amass, 2011).

The *How I Became a Scientist* book sought to provide our young target audience with scientific role models. The scientists come from around the world (from Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, India, and France) and from all over the United States (from Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Texas). Their scientific interests are broad and include psychology, poultry medicine, equine health, infectious diseases, microbiology, and aging. Within the book, we included activities that linked the featured scientists’ work to the state of Indiana’s educational standards for third graders. Our goal was to create a fun and interesting way to incorporate educational activities in a publication that focused on possible scientific role models and their exciting careers!

We are extremely proud of the range of racial and ethnic diversity represented in *How I Became a Scientist*. In order to recruit a more diverse group of young people into the fields of science, research, and veterinary healthcare, it is crucial to expose them to role models who look like them and who may have similar backgrounds to them. We have already collected anecdotal data to support this premise—one third-grader informed us that he didn’t want to be a veterinarian because none of the pictures in another publication we shared with his class had “no vets that looked like me.” We want ALL kids to be able to see themselves in the scientific careers that may interest them and to spark an interest in science in kids that may previously have never even considered such a career. Equally important was our goal to encourage kids who are already interested in scientific careers to strive to pursue their dreams like the scientists did who are featured in *How I Became a Scientist*!

Work Cited

Amass, Sandy. “Representations of the veterinary profession in nonfiction children’s books.” *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 238.9 (2011):1126-32.

About the Authors

Dr. Kauline Cipriani Davis is director of diversity initiatives at the Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine. She is a food microbiologist with a courtesy faculty appointment in the Department of Comparative Pathobiology at Purdue. She is personally and professionally committed to the recruitment of historically underrepresented minority populations to scientific and research careers.

Dr. Sandy Amass is the associate dean for engagement and a professor of veterinary clinical sciences at the Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine. With a focus on workforce development and diversification, she works to excite students who are underrepresented in veterinary medicine by encouraging their interest in veterinary careers.