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Woman To Notice

“Connecting Science to the Past,
Present, and Future...” By: Della Frank

While still a young girl in Silver City, Dr. Rebecca Keller liked to take apart clocks, record players, and music boxes and put them back together as fully functioning gadgets. She would often go into the basement, retrieve her dad's hammer, and build forts out of wood, nails, and screws.

Rebecca graduated from high school in 1981 with honors and went to New Mexico Technical School in Socorro. Her aspiration was to become an oceanographer but she became terribly seasick!

Instead, she received her Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry. After spending about a year in Nykoping, Sweden working as a scientist at the Nuclear Research Facility, Rebecca went to the Florida Institute of Technology to pursue her dreams of becoming a chemical oceanographer. When she realized that she still became seasick, she came home to New Mexico and enrolled in graduate school at the University of New Mexico, where she received a Ph.D. in chemistry in 1992. She worked as a post-doctorate at UNM in cell biology/neuroscience and later went to Berkeley, as a post-doc in molecular biology.

Ultimately, Rebecca developed a philosophy: “Learn to be comfortable with the ever-changing and often paradoxical unknown that life presents to us, and be open, flexible, and curious about the changes life presents to us in the world.”

Rebecca came back to New Mexico planning to teach chemistry at UNM, but instead began writing science books for children. She put together “Real Science for Kids” and its companion “Kogs-4-Kids.” Her company, Gravitas Publications, Inc., was incorporated in 2003.

Real Science for Kids is a curriculum for children in kindergarten through eighth grade. It embodies the belief that children should learn about science through a strong scientific foundation in chemistry, biology, earth and space, and physics, which Rebecca considers to be the core subjects of science.

Kogs-4-Kids is a science program that takes core foundational subjects of biology, chemistry, physics, and earth and



space, and connects these disciplines to other disciplines like history, math, and art education. Instead of learning science from a “topical” perspective (a little bit about plants, human body, and solar system in isolation), a student will gain a well-rounded understanding of science and become “scientifically literate.”

Rebecca shares during an interview that her only son has a serious medical condition that has no cure. Rebecca believes that the cure is out there, likely locked in the “heart, mind, and soul” of a first or second grader. As a scientist and educator, Rebecca would like to provide all the critical thinking tools and foundational scientific information this first or second grader would need to find the cure.

Real Science for Kids and Kogs-4-Kids are being used at public schools, in homes, and at private schools across America and in other countries. Real Science for Kids received an Honorable Mention award from Practical Homeschooling Magazine in 2008.

One critical message Rebecca imparts to educators, scientists, policy makers, and parents is “to not fear opposing viewpoints, but rather to understand that it is the tension between opposing viewpoints that fuel new scientific discoveries.” She indicates that cures for diseases will only happen if we are “intellectually honest” about what we know, and what we don't know, and if we allow our opponents to criticize our work.

For further information, contact Rebecca at gravitas_keller@comcast.net. **NiW**

Della Frank lives and works in Gallup, where she is a freelance writer and poet.