

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BOOK

### 1. What inspired you to write this book?

After reading the children's science books targeted at young girls, my 10-year-old and I were frustrated. Most of the women in the books were dead, so their stories were written by someone else, and the books were illustrated. Books of substance about modern contemporary female STEM role models do not exist. A reviewer of a competitive book remarked: "If someone has a recommendation for a good book about women scientists, I'd love to hear it..." This book is the solution.

### 2. Can you give a brief summary of your book?

Twenty-seven inspiring women leaders in STEM from around the world come together to tell their original, passionate stories describing their perseverance, spirit, brilliance, and personal growth through words and photographs. Sadly, books about women in science for young girls are history books. *Determined to be Extraordinary* will motivate young girls to pursue STEM careers by presenting contemporary, real-life examples of successful women in STEM. The role models they are looking for are right here, right now!

Representation matters. Cultural stereotypes can discourage girls from considering STEM fields as viable career paths. Seeing successful women in STEM fields can inspire and motivate young girls to pursue STEM careers. When they see someone who looks like them achieving greatness, it reinforces the belief that they can do it, too. *'Determined to be Extraordinary'* isn't just a book – it's an invitation. An invitation to be inspired, to dream bigger, and to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the phenomenal women shaping our future.

### 3. Who is the target audience for your book?

This manuscript is an inspirational collection of personal stories from modern women in STEM fields for girls 12-16 years old and young women.

Target consumers include:

Mothers and other female relatives of 12-16-year-old girls looking for motivational stories about successful women in STEM

- Online communities for young girls and their parents and those interested in the accomplishments of modern women
  1. A Mighty Girl website has books, toys, and movies for young girls, and as of spring 2020, it has over 2.6 million Facebook™ fans
  2. Women of Impact is a private Facebook™ group with 66,913 members, managed by National Geographic® and has a book club
- Women in STEM fields whose lives were positively impacted by role models or who feel like a minority in their field
- Educational youth organizations with online bookstores

1. The Girl Scouts of the United States of America has 1.7 million members
  - Public and private school librarians
    1. Recent surveys from the American Library Association show there are 139,468 school librarians
  - Specialized STEM Secondary Schools
    1. There are more than 90 in the USA enrolling tens of thousands of students every year
  - Academic professionals dedicated to teaching and understanding of diversity and women's advancement in science
    1. National Science Teaching Association has more than 57,000 members
    2. Penn State University has a Women in Science: STEM Options Programs for 2020 where competitive book are part of the curriculum
    3. Bowling Green State University sponsors a Women in STEM conference for young girls and the 2020 keynote speaker is the nonfiction children's book author Mary Kay Carson
4. **What message or themes do you hope readers take away from your book?**

**Key Insights:**

- Early Exposure: Access to scientific materials during childhood can spark a lifelong passion for STEM.
  - Academic and Professional Growth: Dawn's career highlights the importance of education and diverse professional experiences in understanding and solving complex scientific issues.
  - Bridging Gaps: By creating a book that features modern women in STEM, Dawn addresses the critical need for contemporary role models in science for young girls.
  - Empowerment through Stories: The memoir not only celebrates women's achievements in STEM but also empowers the next generation to pursue their scientific interests without hesitation.
5. **How long did it take you to write your book?**
- It took me five and a half years from the time I decided to do the book until launch. It took me about six months of networking and start-up activities to start accepting stories. Then, it took about two years to collect the stories, and I had to put them aside for two years due to work and family obligations. Then, just under a year to finalize, market, and publish. The hardest part was probably this last year of finalizing and marketing as it took longer than I planned, and the first company I started with didn't work out, so I had to start over, but in the end, it was all for the best!
6. **What was the editing routine like?**

This is really a labor of love, so I worked whenever the collaborators were available, day or night. For several years, my neighbors wondered what happened to me because I spent so much time indoors. I worked hours on end to finish the stories, one by one. It was wonderful to get to know each of the women so intimately. They were mostly strangers to me when we first started. What a wonderful journey we've had!

7. **What was the most challenging part of writing your book?**

I don't think the writing was the hard part, although each woman's proficiency in writing was different. We're scientists, so for the most part, writing about oneself doesn't come naturally to everyone. Sometimes, a woman's story included events that were still painful and not ready to be put on paper, so we focused on the areas that had already been conquered and spoke about the lessons learned.

8. **Do you have any advice for aspiring editors/authors?**

**Build Strong Communication Skills:** Effective communication is crucial for editors. You need to clearly convey your feedback to authors, balancing constructive criticism with encouragement. Strong interpersonal skills will help build trust and rapport with writers.

**Develop a Keen Eye for Detail:** Attention to detail is essential. This includes not only spotting grammatical errors but also identifying inconsistencies in the text, logical flow, and factual accuracy. Practice editing various types of content to hone this skill.

**Embrace the Editing Process:** Writing means rewriting. Provide meaningful feedback. Editing is a crucial part of writing and embracing it will improve your final manuscript significantly.

**Learn About the Publishing Industry:** Educate yourself on the different paths to publishing, whether it's traditional publishing, self-publishing, or hybrid models. Understanding the pros and cons of each can help you make informed decisions about your writing career.

**Build an Author Platform:** In today's digital age, having an online presence is important. Create a website, start a blog, or use social media to connect with readers and promote your work. An author platform can help you reach a wider audience and engage with your readers.

9. **Will there be a sequel, or future books related to this one?**

I am excited to announce that I am working on a second edition. This new installment aims to gather additional unique and inspiring stories that will touch the lives of a broader base of women and girls. In addition to the sequel, I am also working on developing a podcast series. This podcast will feature in-depth interviews to expand on the themes in the book and the experiences, challenges, and triumphs women in STEM are facing. The goal is to create an accessible and engaging medium that continues to inspire and empower the next generation of female STEM leaders and provide a platform for them to share their journeys and inspire the next generation of female scientists and engineers. Stay tuned for more updates!

16. **What feedback have you received from early readers?**

Some quotes from Middle School readers:

- I liked the quotes because they are inspiring. The story itself was very much her story, not anyone else's, and that was wonderful as I was reading it.
- When I was reading this story I felt that I was right along with the author watching all of the struggles she faced, but then seeing her overcome them with dignity and integrity. This story has encouraged me to stand up to people who tell me I can't do something another person can do because of my gender. It also has taught me that in general anything that stands in my way I can overcome with courage and hope.
- I really liked how motivational this piece was. It was very inspiring because all of these women did not let other people's thoughts get in their way. I liked the powerful messages it conveyed, as well as the inspiring quotes. I also like how it was written from the point of view of the person in the story.
- What I liked most about this story is it shows what her life really was and that she doesn't romanticize her life to be something it wasn't. Because of this, I could relate more from being pushed out to go hiking, to doing homework, it also makes it more unique.
- I liked how from when she was 14 she had a dream of being an engineer. I think that concept of not being afraid to step up and do what you love even if you might get called names is really cool. I liked how she was descriptive and how she explained the issues that she had previously had being the only female engineer, but how she then came out of her shell and she thrived in a way, where she never would have if she stayed as her untrue self inside of her shell.
- I liked the way Charlotte embodied the strengths and skills she shared with us: persistence, resilience, integrity. She was able to come back from setbacks and was fine moving between companies without particular attachments, which I respected. I'm not sure if I could do that. While this may be cliché, she didn't give up, and in the end, that paid off for her.
- I liked how Kimberly was able to work past having ADD and scoliosis that limited her movement. She is very persuasive and encourages moving forwards in the most positive way possible. Kimberly also explains how to keep animals safe on beaches, which I think can make a huge difference in the actions of people.

#### **17. What do you hope to achieve with this book?**

Readers will learn how to:

- Boost their bravery and confidence, inspiring them to pursue STEM careers
- Develop career awareness and explore their interests and talents in STEM
- Draw valuable lessons from successful women who overcame challenges and persevered
- Find inner strength to overcome challenges beyond their control
- Reflect on their personal challenges and apply the wisdom of others to their own life
- Discover real-life female STEM role models who have excelled in their fields
- Connect with the idea that science is a human endeavor, making it engaging and accessible

- Appreciate the diversity of women from various backgrounds in science and technology
- Navigate the evolving roles of men and women at home and in the workplace
- Be extraordinary in your STEM journey, inspired by the stories and lessons in this book

**18. Who designed your book cover, and how did you choose it?**

The book cover art is a painting by Eduardo Urbano Merino ([www.eduardourbanomerino.com](http://www.eduardourbanomerino.com)) of one of the collaborators, Sandra Lopez Leon. She sent me a picture of it to include in her story, and I fell in love with it.

**19. Are there any special acknowledgments or dedications in your book?**

First and foremost, this book would not have been possible without the amazing women who shared my vision for this book, graciously contributed their stories, and entrusted me with them. Your passion, tolerance, and praise were genuinely humbling.

To my children, Gala and Hans Peter, the inspirations for this book, thank you for sacrificing our family time and inspiring me to make the world a better place for you. Gala, thank you for always believing that I can do anything I set my mind to.

Thanks to my husband, Todd, for providing me with a supportive environment that enabled me to complete this work, tolerate my long hours, and allow me to live like a hermit on the weekends for those long years. By the way, we can officially tell the neighbors that I am not in the witness protection program. Without you and my mom, Rose, we would have gone without dinner many nights.

I want to thank Cindy Simpson, the Association for Women in Science, Jennifer Scott, and the Society of Women Engineers for giving me a platform to find contributors. Even though we were strangers, you believed in me and my dream. Your early support fed my enthusiasm and helped make this book possible.

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My gratitude to Ashleigh Kyle for her expert legal reviews and practical viewpoints. You are an inspiration.

**20. Have you written other books, or do you plan to write more?**

Aside from the 2<sup>nd</sup> addition, I do have some other ideas, but I have not solidified the concepts yet. Stay tuned!

