

The Dream of Being a Veterinarian

By Suzy Hopkins

I was one of those kids who bring home tiny baby or injured birds, toads or lizards. I just wanted to nurse them. I had shoeboxes for them with tissues and little dishes of water which I thought would make them heal. Each one died but I was not deterred in my dream to be a veterinarian.

However, in high school I took biology where we dissected a frog. Gross! Additionally, high school chemistry was a great challenge so when I learned that veterinarians take LOTS of science courses I was becoming hesitant to pursue my dream. The final decision came when I worked one summer as a groom and exercise driver for a large stable of Standardbred horses run by a sulky driver at Rockingham Park Racetrack in New Hampshire. I saw what the veterinarians did to those poor horses to make them sound enough to race one more time. I learned to give shots in the horses' necks and give medicine mixed in some yummy food, applied poultices and rubbing oils for the horses' sore muscles. I saw how much importance the horse owners and trainers placed on the ability of their veterinarians. I felt I would never be confident enough to be hired to treat other peoples' horses – surgery on their intestines, stitches in their muscles and skin, dental procedures and lots more.

For 30 years I continued working with horses and could diagnose and treat a myriad of diseases and conditions. The dream had changed but now I was actually making animals heal.