

# Health Literacy: More Federal Funding Keeps Duquesne Professor Bringing It to the Kids



How critical is health literacy for kids and families? Critical enough for the National Institutes of Health to provide an additional \$250,889 in bridge funding for Duquesne University professor Dr. John Pollock to continue his series of planetarium shows and a TV pilot aimed at young children and their families.

Pollock, associate professor of biology in the Bayer School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, will add to a planetarium show for elementary- and middle-school- aged students on reproduction and stem cells, and will write additional scripts for a science-based TV show for kids. So far, his health literacy efforts have attracted \$1.78 million in funding from the National Institutes of Health.

The latest planetarium show, *How We Grow*, is Pollock's ninth venture onto the planetarium screen and is expected to be released in the spring. The latest round of funding will allow the show to be longer and to include more details on how stem cells continuously work in the body, healing the skin, developing new taste buds and helping children grow taller. While the star of the animated show procrastinates in writing a report on how growth happens, certain objects in his room—from a jellyfish and stuffed chicken to the bacteria in his sneakers—start to talk and tell him how they grow. Through these objects, the school-aged hero gets ideas for his report and learns how human reproduction, growth and development unfold.

As with Pollock's other shows, *How We Grow* will have enrichment materials for both students and teachers. For content, Pollock calls upon the expertise of Duquesne's Dr. Richard Elinson, who specializes in developmental biology in the Bayer School; Dr. Gerard Schatten, deputy director of Magee Women's Hospital Research Institute, and Dr. Charles Etensohn, a biology professor at Carnegie Mellon University, as well as local fifth-grade teacher, Kristen Hannan.

The funding also will provide the opportunity for Pollock to develop more story concepts for *Scientastic!*, a television show that piloted on WQED in September. The 30-minute, live action show mixes the knowledge of local doctors and other experts with scientific sleuthing, music and dance. This additional funding will allow the team to develop script treatments and storyboards, including science content, for at least three new shows, Pollock said.

The goal of *Scientastic!* is to help people make decisions that lead to healthy lifestyles. It teaches basic science princi-

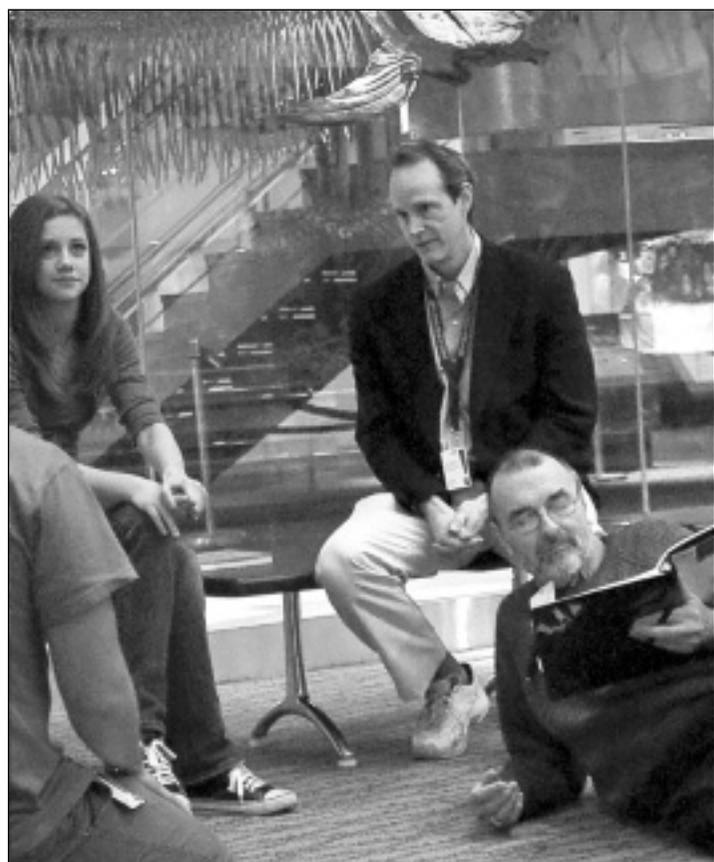
ples, ties those basic principles to health and addresses social issues pertinent to kids.

"Between 70 and 100 million adults in America have low health literacy skills," explained Pollock. "By reaching out to children, we can help to educate not only the next generation of health decision-makers, but the entire family."

To learn more about Pollock's health literacy efforts, visit [www.sepa.duq.edu](http://www.sepa.duq.edu).



*Scientastic!* star Lili Reinhart at the National Aviary with her ever-present notebook.



Dr. John Pollock, center, on location in the Carnegie Museum of Natural History with *Scientastic!* lead Lili Reinhart and Emmy-Award winning director Leo Eaton.

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