

Lifelong Educator Publishes a Children's Book that Teaches Empathy and Tolerance

(Twin Cities) - There is no questioning the value of teaching youngsters to have empathy and tolerance towards others, but just how do you do it?

Lifelong Minnesota educator SissyMarySue, who is widely recognized for her innovative Jelly Beans Creative Learning approach that focuses on emotional competence, critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, language learning, and the natural world, has figured out a way. Her new children's book, *Jelly Beans the Cheetah and Hope*, is a beautifully illustrated story that features the unlikely pairing of a sad little girl and a captured cheetah who discover how much they have in common when they embark on an adventure in friendship. They have both experienced profound loss, but persevere by filling each other's lives with hope through sharing empathy, kindness, joy and love.

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Radio Interview WCCO (CBS) Jordana Green- with SissyMarySue- Empathy

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Minnesota Author's Children's Book Series Teaches Empathy and Tolerance

By Rachel M. Anderson, Contributing Writer

(St. Cloud, Minn.) – There is something all parents have in common. They want their kids to grow up to be good citizens of the world, and feel empowered to make a difference.

For some that may mean one day getting involved in a project that brings clean water to impoverished villages in Africa. Others may be more interested in preventing bullying or saving homeless animals.

No matter what the cause they take up, many kids in Minnesota and beyond will have likely been inspired by the work of SissyMarySue, the pen name of Wendy Muhlhauser of St. Cloud, Minn. She started up SissyMarySueLLC in 2014 as a vehicle for launching a project she had been dreaming up for some time: a children's book series that teaches empathy, humanitarianism and tolerance.

The idea came about as a result of a trip to Africa she took with the Edina Rotary in 2007 for a humanitarian clean water project. During that trip, SissyMarySue became familiar with the Barabaig tribe. "Although they had little to call their own, the one thing that stood out to me was their gratitude for just being alive," she said.

When she returned home, SissyMarySue decided to tell the story of her experience through a children's book titled *Jelly Beans the Cheetah and Hope* (Beaver's Pond Press, 2014, \$24.95), in hopes of inspiring others. The beautifully illustrated story features the unlikely

pairing of a sad little girl and a captured cheetah who discover how much they have in common when they embark on an adventure in friendship. They have both experienced profound loss, but persevere by filling each other's lives with hope through sharing empathy, kindness, joy and love.

Jelly Beans the Cheetah and Hope has been so well received, SissyMarySue is currently hard at work on Book Two in the series. The planned title is *Jelly Beans the Cheetah and Hope: Empathy Airlines*. The newest book includes a love song to mankind called "One Child Cries" Muhlhauser wrote. "The song encourages the concept of our shared humanity," she said. Like the first book, it will focus on the messages of tolerance and empathy, but there is an added element of creative play. "The fact that they are playing airplane in the book for me is twofold. It's a way for me as an educator to teach about the value of play for language development, and it's also a way for the little girl in my book to get around the language barrier, but still teach members of the Barabaig tribe about her flying to their country from America," said SissyMarySue.

The writing, editing, design, publication and marketing of Book One was the majority of SissyMarySue's graduate work. While Book Two served as her thesis project for her Masters in Human Development from St. Mary's University in Minnesota. "My goal with the book series is to get kids thinking about the connections we all have. I want to show them we can all be kind and giving people who understand we are one together," said SissyMarySue. "The books are about empathy, our shared humanity and connection to all."

SissyMarySue's work has been very well received. In her five-star review, Sandra Schley, Ph.D., said, "A tender experience that recounts relationships - friends, family, and ties to the animal kingdom -- in poetic form. The author has produced a beautifully written and illustrated book with the help of young students whom she taught and mentored. The product of selfless compassion and love, this book can be used academically or as a good personal read for young and old."

In her evaluation of SissyMarySue's work towards her masters, Lee Truer from St. Mary's University said, "I cannot emphasize enough what a gift it has been for me to be your advisor and a part of your team to get book number one out into the world which so needs its message. I have 100 percent confidence that book number two will be equally compelling when it is finished," she said.

Like with Book One in the series, SissyMarySue is enlisting student talent to create the illustrations to keep her costs down. MCAD student Sarah Williams was recently selected as an intern, who will receive credit for her work from her college.

SissyMarySue currently works with a total of eight high school and college-aged interns who support the mission of empowering young people with empathy to spring into compassionate action! They help with marketing, audio recording, sharing musical arrangements, illustration and P.R., among other things. "I believe that the true strength and beauty of this work is derived from my mentors and interns," she said.

As she did with the first book in the series, SissyMarySue is once again planning to donate a portion of the proceeds from sales to the Cheetah Conservation Fund and the H2O For Life Program, which helps make sure impoverished people have access to clean water. Both global partners endorsed the first book and remain closely connected to SissyMarySue's work. "If we teach, model and show empathy, kindness and love, there's more peacefulness, harmony and tolerance in the world. Kids see that, adults see that. The more of us who do these things the more the world follows the way", said SissyMarySue.

To learn more about the books, or SissyMarySue LLC, visit www.sissymarysue.com. SissyMarySue will be speaking at a private dual-district Rotary Club conference on Fri., May 13. The function is being held at Mystic Lake Casino, located at 2400 Mystic Lake Blvd. in Prior Lake and begins at 2:45 p.m.

About the Author

SissyMarySue is a lifelong Minnesota educator. She is widely recognized for her innovative Jelly Beans Creative Learning approach that focuses on emotional competence, critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, language learning, and the natural world. After retiring the Jelly Beans Creative Learning brand, she launched SissyMarySue LLC, producing books that focus on literacy, emotional competence, critical thinking, and world themes. Using her books as content, her play/drama approach has been effectively implemented in many classrooms from pre-K to middle school.

Through speaking and training, SissyMarySue demonstrates her philosophy that empowering youth with empathy and an understanding of our shared humanity results in more tolerance, peacefulness, and harmony. Classroom management is less of an issue when we empower our youth with empathy, equipping them with emotional competence. This empowerment inspires youth to spring into compassionate action in service for their world.

NOTE- I operated solo, in marketing my book, until I brought on a publicist, this past spring for a brief period. She produced this article and got me the WCCO (CBS) Interview with Jordana Green. Click on link.....

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