

The story of Lilly the Lash

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CORRESPONDENT

There Lilly was, lying back against some chimney stones and enjoying music from the woodland creatures, when she was interrupted by the noise of voices arguing through a window of the house below.

Every item in the kitchen, from the butter and eggs to the teacup and the flour, were arguing and being rude with one another. Such is the life of Lilly the Lash, who quickly flew through the window to try to straighten things out.

Lilly is the creation of local children's book author Julie Woik, who has just released her fourth "Life and Times of Lilly the Lash" book in the series. Woik created the unusual character, which is an eyelash fairy, in an unlikely way.

"Late one night, on my way to the bathroom, I rubbed my cheek," Woik said. "As soon as I saw a lash on my finger, it became Lilly the Lash. At the time, I had a friend who was going through some issues, and I wrote a poem for her, using Lilly."

Later on, someone who worked in the publishing industry saw one of her "Lilly" poems and encouraged her to use the character in themes geared toward children. What she came up with was a series of books that focus on Lilly, an eyelash who lives on the face of a young girl, who is also the narrator.

Lilly helps the girl learn, through interactions with others, values and other tools

that are essential for young people and that help them develop good character and self-value. Woik's first four Lilly books talk about self-worth, sharing, honesty and respect.

"I'm writing about old-fashioned values with a modern twist," Woik said. "It's 1950s basic stuff."

Those lessons are one reason why teachers, schools, libraries and other child-focused places love to have Woik come in to talk about her books and participate in story-related activities with the children.

Her newest book, "The Life and Times of Lilly the Lash; The Kacklin' Kitchen" teaches children about respect, while promoting literacy and imparting an important anti-bullying message. This issue has become of national importance among educators and teachers, and even in the nation's capitol, as October was recognized as National Anti-Bullying month.

Part of the reason Woik decided to develop this series was to provide a way to make a difference in the world. Besides the educational aspects of the books themselves, she also is giving back to the community by donating a portion of the proceeds of each book to a different charity.

So far, with the first four books, she has been able to give to the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute, the National Lung Cancer Partnership, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and the Organization for Autism Research.

Woik said the books are on an age 4 through 10 reading level, but are meant

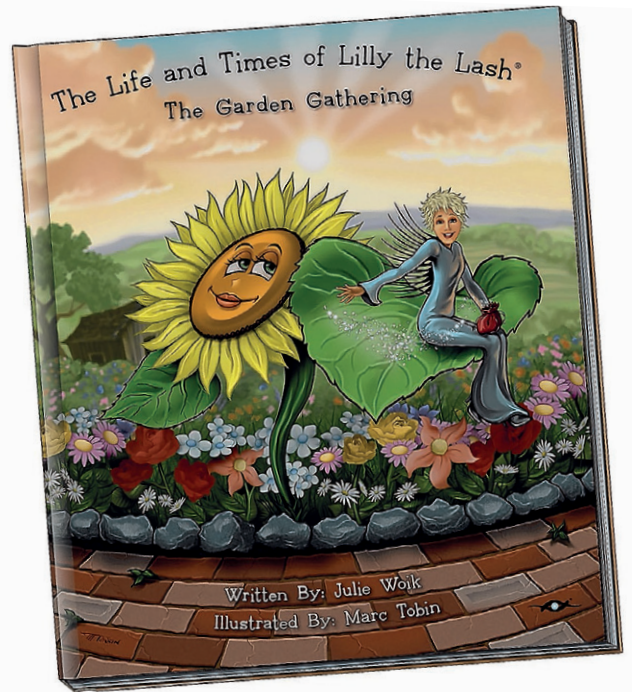
to be enjoyed by people of any age. You're never too young, or old, to learn lessons about the importance of things like respecting and being kind to one another — and Woik believes in the good in everyone.

"We are not going to hell in a hand basket," she said. "There are people out there trying very desperately to make the world a better place. People are tired of the world changing for the worse. These books can remind even us adults what we should be doing — love yourself, love your neighbor and make good choices.

For more information, visit www.lillythelash.com.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JULIE WOIK

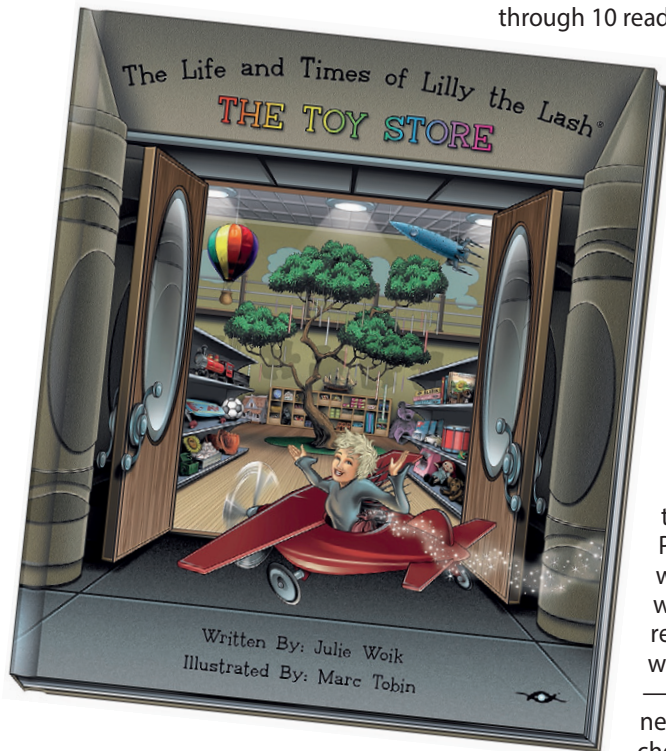


Sarasota-based children's book author Julie Woik writes entertaining stories with a lesson.

Above: The theme of Julie Woik's first book was self-esteem. Proceeds from sales benefitted the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute, specifically breast cancer research.



Left: Woik's newest book is about respect. Proceeds from the sales will benefit the Organization for Autism Research.



Woik's second book focused on sharing, and benefitted the National Lung Cancer Partnership.



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