

Author Reinvents Her Life, Helps Others, With Children's Books

BY TRACIE SCHMIDT

“Have you ever heard the fable that if you have a fallen eyelash, you can make a wish and blow it to the wind? I grew up with that in Wisconsin,” says author Julie Woik about the inspiration for her children’s books. She was working at an antique store in Sarasota when her life changed.

“In the middle of the night, seven years ago,” she explains, “I woke up and I wiped my cheek and an eyelash was on my finger. And as soon as I looked at the eyelash, it was ‘Lilly the Lash’ and a poem filled my head.”

What started out as a simple poem for a friend eventually caught the attention of a contact in publishing, who encouraged her to turn her idea into a story.

“I talked to my husband about it and he said, ‘Why don’t you?’ This was not on my bucket list. It was not something I had dreamed of, but I sat down to see what would happen and out started coming some books,” Woik said.

Her character, a fairy called Lilly the Lash, travels the world helping others. Only the reader can see her, and rather than solve problems with magic, she secretly helps the person in need learn a lesson on their own. From the get-go, Woik wanted her books not only to be entertaining, but also to teach children about honesty, respect, sharing and self-worth. Her ultimate goal is to teach “old-fashioned values with a modern day twist.” Beyond that, a portion of her book sales go to support patients with breast cancer, lung cancer, cystic fibrosis or autism.

Woik is no stranger to helping individuals in need. In her experience working in psychiatry at Sarasota Memorial, she has met and assisted individuals from all walks of life and



Author Julie Woik

recognizes the basic human need for support and encouragement, whether you are seven years old or seventy.

The process of getting her story to print, however, was a challenging one. Without any previous experience, Woik and her husband learned the ins and outs of self publishing. There were times, she said, when they were faced

with so many fees it seemed as if they had to “pay people to buy the book.” But they were determined. She recommends getting an agent, for starters, and she does most of the marketing on her own. Woik makes appearances at schools and weekend art shows, getting the word out.

She was surprised by the response. Requests from educators, special needs groups, Girl Scouts and other organiza-

tions began pouring in for Woik to visit and share her work. She was asked to create teaching tools and games, which she offers free on her website. Her book “The Life and Times of Lilly the Lash: the Garden Gathering” is being turned into a musical play.

Woik now writes full time and has plans for a 15-book series. She finds encouragement in her work as a new author.

“There was a time when I couldn’t bring myself to watch the news anymore, but then when this happened and I started going out to schools and meeting all these people, instead of feeling like we were going to hell in a handbasket, I felt like there was hope for the handbasket. I thought, man, it’s going to be okay. These kids are cool and they want to make the world a different place and they have to be taught that way.”

She recommends her books for educators and grandparents with kids age 0 to 10. To learn more, visit www.lillythelash.com.

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