

Bedtime Ritual Evolves Into Unique Method Of Storytelling

By HELEN KNIGHT
CLB Books is the brainchild of Wendy Cheslak, who writes, illustrates and produces her children's laminated storybooks. The CLB concept is an unusual one and one that holds a promise of success.

Cheslak's books are intended for children aged three to six. The stories are short and written in rhyme. Each story focuses on a particular value or principle, such as sharing, which gives the book added educational value.

What makes the books particularly unique is that they are illustrated with graphics that the children color themselves. The books' laminated surface means that the coloring can easily be wiped away with a dry paper towel, leaving it ready to be colored again. The lamination also makes the books durable.

The idea for these storybooks came through Cheslak's son, Mark. Cheslak was in the habit of reading her son a bedtime story, until one particular visit to Granny's when she forgot to pack the storybooks.

Her son missed his usual bedtime treat, so Cheslak made up stories to tell him. He came to prefer these stories, and soon Cheslak had quite a repertoire. One day Mark told her that she should write the stories down.

"I credit Mark with encouraging me," she said. "I'd always liked to write, it was just a question of finding my niche, what I was good at."

She began writing her stories in March of last year. To illustrate them, Cheslak decided to use

computer graphics. However, she found that the more color and detail involved, the longer the pictures took to print and the more expensive the equipment required.

"I tried to keep costs down so that I could offer the books at a reasonable price," she said. Cheslak decided that the solution to her problem was to print just the outline of very simple illustrations. This would allow children to color the pictures themselves. Laminating the books enables children to color the illustrations over and over again.

"There are coloring books with stories," she said, "but I noticed that once they are colored, children lose interest in the stories."

Cheslak applied to the Library of Congress for copyrights of her books. When they were issued she realized what had started as a hobby had the potential to be a lot more.

After careful consideration, she decided to devote the time necessary to develop CLB Books as a business venture. In February, she left her job and began working on her books full-time.

"Being author and publisher is quite a big chunk to break off," she said.

However, she explained why she decided to take responsibility for all aspects of the process.

"It's very difficult to break into the publishing area, especially for a new writer," she explained. "If you have an agent, there's the cost of that. If a publisher does like it, there's a lot of waiting and compromise involved. I wanted to develop this line and keep it as simple and pure as possible, something children can learn from."

The work involved in writing and publishing CLB Books is extensive. Cheslak often puts in 10-hour days she schedules around family life.

"When you're working for your-

ness, it doesn't really seem that much," she said. "The time flies." Cheslak begins writing her books with the story. She bounces ideas off of her son and once she has the complete idea, it only takes her half an hour to write the story. Next comes work on the graphics. A more complex process that takes Cheslak several weeks to complete. The production of course, comes last.

Cheslak enjoys the work, particularly "the creative end of it." She also feels the benefits of working at home.

"I know a lot of mothers will know what I mean when I say that I felt a bit guilty being at work all day," she said, "leaving all my son's education up to the school. Working at home gives me more time to spend with my son."

In addition to being able to spend the time she used to spend commuting with her family, Cheslak also feels that running her own business gives her a certain flexibility. Cheslak sums up the drawbacks of starting such a venture as a lack of certainty.

"You developed it, it's your creation. You wonder if it'll be as exciting and motivating to others as it is to you."

Yet Cheslak gives failure no more than a passing consideration.

"Failure's worse than not knowing if it'd work out," she said. "And if it didn't, would it really be a failure?"

Cheslak believes in her books and feels that, if business were to falter, she would simply try different approaches until success came.

Looking ahead, Cheslak would like to see the line grow as her son grows. If the company is successful, she would eventually like to introduce a catalog line of books, always with the dual purpose to educate and entertain.

All CLB Books include what Cheslak calls "certain principles" to help to convey "these include sharing, love, respect and neat-

ness. They are values Cheslak believes all parents want to teach their children.

"But I also want to make it fun," she said. "It's a book line to make children think as well as to entertain them."

At the end of every book, there is a question page. The author-artist-bookbinder includes this, she said, because "I think it impresses the lesson upon the child and it opens up an opportunity for discussion, for parent-child interaction."

In addition to this, the book has large enough print so that children who are learning to read can read the stories for themselves. The pages are unnumbered, which offers an opportunity for number practice. The opportunity to color and recolor the pictures allows children to improve their dexterity skills and to be more involved in the story. All these elements together give CLB Books very wide applications.

Cheslak sees her books as "educational, creative tools" that can be used by parents and their children, offering "quiet, educational, entertaining time together."



At son Mark's encouragement, Cheslak writes down stories she likes to tell



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Rob Brame practices secondary survey technique to determine possible abdominal injury to Jason Osborne during the South Redell Red Cross Chapter's eight-hour standard first aid class completed recently over three evenings at the War Memorial. At right is Judy Phillips, the local chapter's health and safety instructor. The nine people who completed the training were certified in Red Cross first aid and adult cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. Most took the course as part of their preparation to work as lifeguards this summer. The chapter offers at least two classes in first aid, CPR or a combination of both at least twice each month.

Mrs. Almetha Miller's News

Telephone 663-4976

—The Women's Fellowship Committee of Mooresville will host a ladies luncheon June 15 at 5 p.m. Proceeds will go to sponsor a project for Mooresville area youth. Ticket information may be obtained by calling 663-3168, 664-4329 or 663-0150. The public is cordially invited.

—Children's Day will be observed June 9 at 2:30 p.m. at St. Phillip's Baptist Church, Huntersville. Rev. Sylvanus Tito of Charlotte, formerly associated with St. Paul Community Baptist Church, will be guest speaker. St. Phillips will observe Father's Day June 16 with a special program. The speaker will be Mrs. Elizabeth Steger, wife of Dr. C. Donald Steger, pastor of Reeder Memorial Baptist Church in Charlotte. Rev. Leroy Henderson is pastor.

—The Stewart Board and Trustee Board of Bethesda A.M.E. Zion Church will have their 12-Tribe Rally June 9 at 6 p.m. Rev. David Miller is pastor. The public is invited.

—Pastor appreciation services at Bethesda will begin June 10 and continue through June 23. There will be a different speaker each night.

—The Missionary Meeting of the North Carolina District will be at Greenfield Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church in Charlotte June 8. The host pastor is Dr. A.C. Hunicutt. The president is Mrs. Allie Clark.

—Church school and district conference of the North Carolina District will be held at Torrence Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church June 13-14. Presiding Elder is Rev. Horace C. Walser. The host pastor is Rev. A.E. Garnett.

—The Usher Board of Watkins Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church will celebrate its anniversary at 3 p.m.

HealthCare To Host Health Fair

HealthCare Unlimited, a Davidson-based home health care agency, will sponsor a Health Fair June 12 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The Fair will be held on the Village Green, South Main Street in Davidson. The objective is to inform the general public, especially senior citizens.

Community Health Services of Charlotte will provide cholesterol testing at \$8 per test and blood sugar testing at \$5 per test. All other testing will be free of charge.

Health agencies and medical professionals attending the fair will be: Innovations for Health Care, Laurel Eye Associates, Arthritis Patient Services, the Association for Sickle Cell Disease, the American Red Cross, the Mecklenburg County Health Department, the American Cancer Society, Lake Norman YMCA, and Dr. Kevin Molan, podiatrist.

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