

Rhonda Goodall Success Story – author of children’s books



By Lorrie DeFrank

The blue blob that made Rhonda Goodall giggle when she imagined it as a young girl has become a business success for her as an adult and a comfort to countless young readers. So far, the Ponte Vedra Beach author and illustrator of children’s books has written a series of four books that feature Frizzle, a loveable blue character that is different from those around him, and two other books, all of which offer understanding and compassion for children who need it ... just like Frizzle.

Goodall recently traveled to Orlando to receive two more Presidential Book Awards from the Florida Authors and Publishers Association—this time for “Frizzle’s Funky Day at the Zoo,” which encourages kids to be themselves, and “Where’d Grandma Go,” a tribute to her mother that helps young children deal with losing a loved one. Almost all of her books have received FAPA awards.

Possessing a self-proclaimed passion for kids, Goodall is the mother of five—two grown stepchildren in her native Pennsylvania and three sons in Florida ranging from age 10 to 22. Before they moved to Florida in 2006 to be near her husband’s family, she worked in the medical field and was involved with children’s hospitals, including art projects for a Ronald McDonald House. She met her husband Doug at an ice cream shop called Sweet Temptations that she owned in Pittsburgh.

Settled in Florida, Goodall became absorbed in raising her sons, dabbling at writing but not taking time to pursue publishing her books. One of her sons was diagnosed with diabetes as a toddler. When he was in first grade and she noticed how curious his classmates were about his shots and routine, she wrote “My Pancreas Needs Glasses,” a lighthearted look at body parts that don’t work quite right. The original Frizzle book, which talks about family—and how those in our lives who love and protect us are truly our family, whether they’re the family we were born into or not--soon followed.

After Goodall’s mother, Dorothy McCreery, drowned in a horrific car accident on Goodall’s birthday in January 2015, she felt an urge to publish her books—for herself and her family. The following April she reached out to well-known local biographer Susan Brandenburg who helped Goodall get her existing projects published, encouraged her to write more books and introduced her to the Jacksonville Women’s Business Center.

“Rhonda Goodall had a great idea for a children’s book and I recognized her talent and her drive to succeed. Her Frizzle character is universal ... we all have a little bit of Frizzle in us,” said Brandenburg. “I introduced Rhonda to our JWBC St. Johns County Success Circle and she has grown immensely through the advice, connectivity and encouragement of the circle. Never underestimate the power of a circle of supportive women!”

“Every year since then a new book has come out,” said Goodall, praising Brandenburg for her strong support and guidance. “I feel like my mom is with me with every single book.”

Goodall credits the monthly JWBC Success Circle meetings with keeping her on task and providing peer support to keep her inspired.

“It is a wonderful group of trusting friends,” said Goodall, commending JWBC for focusing on women in business. “Every woman, no matter what career or position, can use encouragement. They really care about you.”

The real value is that the circles allow participants to be accountable for what they say they are going to do, said Joan Bonnette, who facilitates JWBC Success Circles in St. Johns and Clay counties.

“Rhonda has a passion and direction for writing these books. She needs to get the illustrating and writing done. With her busy life, keeping on track is a valuable thing,” Bonnette said. “For small business owners who don’t have a large staff of people to talk to, the circles serve as their advisory boards.”

The group support also provides Goodall the credibility that she is a recognized writer in business to make money, Bonnette said.

For a good-hearted person like Goodall who enjoys giving her books away, that is a challenge she acknowledges. Therefore, she heeds advice from Bonnette and other JWBC contacts to market and promote her books through social media and other venues. She has moved on from Brandenburg’s publisher and contracted with Southern Yellow Pine Publishing in Tallahassee to publish her books.

Goodall illustrates her books and turns the sketches over to graphic designer Andie Jackson to do the computer work. She features children’s drawings in the backs of her books and, as suggested by her Success Circle, plans to use kids as spokespersons to promote them. Her books are available at selected area bookstores, hospital gift shops and doctors’ offices, and through major booksellers online. Her next book, “Frizzle Meets Frazzle,” is due out next spring.

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