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Local author writes children book on manners

BY ANDREW SMITH
BANNER STAFF

When Sandy Van Cromvoirt says her new job is a gas, she couldn't be closer to the truth.

Van Cromvoirt, formerly of Listowel and now living in Paris, Ontario, is the author of *Meet The Farties*, a new children's book that's having just as much appeal to adults. Van Cromvoirt said the idea for a family of little butts came from her granddaughter Skye Blue Spinks when she was young, who would announce when she felt something brewing.

"She'd say 'watch out Grandma, here comes Magnificent Mary' and a little bubble would pop out," she said. "She is famous now for that line."

The joke grew among the family, and Van Cromvoirt thought about sharing the fun with others.

"I got thinking if we're having so much fun, maybe other people would get a charge out of it," Van Cromvoirt said.

She began the process of creating 65 names for characters, and with the help of illustrator Steven Ahola, started crafting characteristics for each one.

"We tried to keep it very, very cute, and not crude," she said.

Freddy Fartie was the first character approved by Van Cromvoirt's test audience of her grandchildren, and she followed up with Billy Bubbles, Timmy Tootie, Princess Pop and Not Me Mama. When it came to the name for the family patriarch, Van Cromvoirt landed on the name of her husband to come up with Mr. Bart Fart.

"I already had the book well on the way to being written when I thought I better tell him," Van Cromvoirt said.

The first copies of the book were printed in December last year, and Van Cromvoirt took some samples around to bookstore chains Indigo, Coles and Chapters.

"Every manager took the book, they thought it was hilarious," she said.

Since then, the book has taken off like a rocket, not only as a colourful read for kids, but a great laugh for adults who make use of the accompanying sound machine that comes in handy for pranks.

"I've had such great response from kids and parents," she said. "It just gives a good laugh, and we need more of them in life."

Copies of the books have also been donated to hospitals in Listowel, Stratford, Brantford and Cambridge in hopes of giving the younger patients a little joy during their stay.

"Number one, kids love bodily functions, and laughter is healing," Van Cromvoirt said. "If kids can laugh in the hospital, it's served its purpose."

Van Cromvoirt points out that not only is it a fun book, but hopefully kids get a little more out of it. The first book teaches a lesson about manners, with others to follow.

"Every book will have a lesson or a moral, something the kids can grow with but with a funny, little twist," Van Cromvoirt said.

Van Cromvoirt expects around 10 more books as she gets through all of her characters, with each one coming with a new set of trading cards and a sound machine. Other merchandising includes stickers, T-shirts, temporary tattoos and fridges magnets.

"We might eventually want to get into animation because they're just so adorable," she said.

The next book in the series is all about Magnificent Mary, the creation of granddaughter Skye Blue, who is now 13 and taking her fame in stride.

"She was fine when she was younger, then she got a little embarrassed," she said. "Now she's just rolling with it."

Van Cromvoirt and her entourage will be appearing at The Bookery Cafe on March 13 at 3 p.m. to perform and give a book reading.



Submitted Photo

ALL IN THE FAMILY - *Meet The Farties* author Sandy Van Cromvoirt (back left) poses with grandchildren Skye Blue Spinks, Jake Zavitz, daughter Rhonda Lee Zavitz, Lydia Zavitz (on knee), Josh Zavitz and Jack Zavitz. The book hopes to give children a laugh while teaching a lesson on manners.