

Odessa mom's book gives back

A portion of profits will go to the Heart Gallery of Tampa Bay

BY COURTNEY CAIRNS PASTOR
cpastor@tampatrib.com



Lori Diez wrote and self-published "Angel or Not? Angel for Sure!"

ODESSA — Lori Diez started writing a children's book to give her daughter something readable and relatable. Now she is hoping the book does well enough to help hundreds of kids.

Diez penned and self-published "Angel or Not? Angel for Sure!" this year, telling a story about a fourth-grader in a Catholic school who has to decide how to handle a bully. She is donating 75 percent of her book sale profits to the Heart Gallery of Tampa Bay, a traveling exhibit of photos and audio clips featuring foster children who need to be adopted.

A mother of three, Diez was

adopted as a child and is passionate about the cause. She is selling her book for about \$10 on her website, www.angelfor.sure.com, and on Amazon.com but said she can give \$4 to \$5 from her website sales. It's about a dollar per book less from the Amazon sales, she said.

Diez never thought of herself as a writer. She was a dental hygienist. But reading to her children got her to consider trying it.

"I was reading with my daughter the Junie B. (Jones) books over and over," Diez said. "We got to the point where we ran out and were re-reading Junie B. books and I thought, 'I



CHILDREN'S BOARD OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Lori Diez wrote the book to give Catholic school students "a book that was about them."

could do this.' "

She also saw a need for more fiction with a Catholic back-

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On writing a children's book

ground. She and her children all attended Catholic schools, but parochial schools never showed up in their reading. She wanted children to see themselves in a book, from reflections of their faith to details like celebrating Mass.

"I wanted them to have a book that was about them," Diez said. "Everyone else is politically correct when it comes to mentioning God. I wanted them to read about that."

Her youngest daughter, Alexis, was in first or second grade when Diez began playing

around with her story. But she didn't have a vision or drive to finish. It wasn't until Alexis began taking horseback riding lessons a couple of years later that Diez began concentrating on it.

She took her computer to Alexis' lessons and wrote in the car. She finished "Angel" when Alexis was in fourth grade. She now is in sixth at St. Lawrence Catholic School.

"Angel or Not" follows a little girl who always tries to do the right thing who is faced with a bully, a situation Diez drew from

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her childhood. She turns to her parents and siblings for help.

Diez showed it to no one until she finished. The hardest part was waiting for her daughter and her friends — the target audience — to read it.

“That truly was my biggest, sweatiest moment, waiting in anticipation,” she said.

The 200-page book turned into a family affair. Alexis provided the inspiration for Angel, and her friends appear as characters at Sacred Heart, named for the Pinellas Park school Diez attended. Alexis also modeled for the cover photo, which Diez’s sister-in-law, a professional photographer, shot. Diez’s middle son, Michael, sketched the illustrations. Her oldest son, Randy Jr., inspired the main boy character.

Diez is at work marketing “Angel” at Catholic schools and visiting classrooms to talk to children about it. She also is on page 58 of a sequel.

cpastor@tampatrib.com
(727) 815-1072
