

Grosse Pointe News



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Author forms foundation to expand ‘giving back’ experience

By [Jody McVeigh](#) on November 07, 2018



The pop-up event was based on Rose-Vallee's book, "Dinosaurs Living in my Hair."

The last few years have been a whirlwind for Jayne Rose-Vallee.

The Grosse Pointe Farms resident went from first-time author with "Dinosaurs Living in my Hair," published in 2015, to motivational speaker, traveling the country to discuss her book and its sequel, "Dinosaurs Living in my Hair 2."

She recently added staff to help as she takes the DLIMH movement a step further. Heather Mertz, also of Grosse Pointe Farms, shares office space on The Hill, where the two collaborate to expand their mission and debut the Literacy for Kids, Inc. non-profit.

"Every time I do an event it increases brand awareness," Rose-Vallee said. "The reason we're starting the foundation is, so much of what I do is giving back and I'm OK with that. But if one person can do what I've been doing — and there's such a need for it — by starting the foundation and getting more people involved, we'll be able to give back even more."

The giving back part began with Rose-Vallee's first book, which teaches children about acceptance and inclusion, and subsequent school visits.



Children decorated cookies during the event, which followed a dinosaur theme. Photos courtesy of John Martin



The sequel touches on bullying and what community is. While Rose-Vallee doesn't discuss bullying during school appearances, she focuses on building community.

"Once they understand, 'You are a community,' they start to understand you may not look the same or think the same, but you have something in common," she said. "Rather than touch on bullying ... I do tattling vs. telling. Sixty to 70 percent of kids don't tell an adult because a lot of them think it's tattling. We've created a form that shows the difference between tattling and telling. It needs to be talked about."

The book and its sequel have won numerous national awards, including three Moonbeam Children’s Book Awards and two Dragonfly Book Awards. “Dinosaurs Living in My Hair!2” has also been honored with the prestigious Benjamin Franklin Silver book award.

Additional lessons the books provide — which are what the DLIMH brand is all about — are imagination, creativity, beat, rhythm, poetry and community. Rose-Vallee and Mertz recently created a video to aid their school presentations.

“One of our goals is to spread where we’re reading,” Rose-Vallee said, noting she’s always chosen diverse locations to speak and donates books to school libraries. “We want them to know poetry is in so much of life that they don’t even know about. If they’re on a swing set, swinging, the movement in that — that’s poetry.”



A child plays with a dinosaur at the event.

Currently, Rose-Vallee is scheduled to visit University Liggett School Wednesday, Nov. 7. She has presentations booked this year and into next in Wyoming, New Hampshire, Florida and New York.

“It’s exhausting,” she said. “I don’t know how teachers do it, but it’s fun for the kids to have visitors to school. They love when someone comes in and makes eye contact. They want to show their world to an outsider.”

Rose-Vallee and Mertz are launching a new website to bring the books, school visits, foundation and all other facets under one umbrella.

“That will give us a chance to do blogs, newsletters, schedule events,” Mertz said. “People can see our products, shop, buy books.”

The foundation takes Rose-Vallee’s passion for working with children and sparking their imaginations and unites it with a broader group of participants, donors and partners.

For example, Mertz is working on a book about autism that will be added to the foundation's repertoire.

"There aren't any really good books that cover the topic of autism," Mertz said. "Autistic children are thrown into the public school setting and expected to make it one happy family. There are no children's books to teach other children about children with autism. This fits in with our whole theme of community, awareness, tolerance."

Added Rose-Vallee, "The idea is to partner with other things like that, grow and help us spread the word."

Other ideas include mailing a children's publication such as a magazine or newsletter.

"I'm a big believer that print for children is important," Rose-Vallee said.

"We've got some exciting things coming up," Mertz said. "It's so fun to see what's coming and we've already come so far. ... There's always more, always something we can do. Our brains never stop working."

Rose-Vallee has a third DLIMH book written and soon to be published. She also wrote a young-adult novel for boys.

"(Rose-Vallee) should be retiring, but she's doing this and giving back," Mertz said.

"But I think it's time for this village to help," Rose-Vallee added. "If it works well with the two of us, there are other ambassadors out there."

For more information, books or other merchandise, visit dinosaurslivinginmyhair.com and literacyforkids.org