

## Author puts charitable spin on publishing



Author Debra Young Hatch reads "Giraffes in my Closet" to students at Hicks Elementary School on Thursday.

PHOTOS BY RACHEL DENNY CLOW/CALLER-TIMES

### Vicky Camarillo

Corpus Christi Caller Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK - TEXAS

Giraffes are bashful creatures, according to a new children's book by Corpus Christi writer Debra Hatch. That's why they like to hide in closets.

After she read the book to students at Hicks Elementary Thursday morning, a kindergartner spoke up: "The book was really amazing," he said, but "giraffes can't fit in any closets."

Hatch countered that, in a way, it is possible. "You can create anything in your imagination and write it," she said.

"Giraffes in My Closet" is about three giraffes — Mildred, Seth and Emily — who make their way into a boy's house and decide to make his bedroom closet their new home. The boy has trouble adjusting to his new roommates, who play games and make a ruckus every night. But over time, he grows used to them.

Hatch wrote the story in one day, inspired by a dream her husband had. "Giraffes in My Closet" is the first book she has published under For Kids' Sake Publishing, a company she founded.

For Kids' Sake has a unique model: Every book published by the company will be dedicated to a child with a chronic illness, and part of the proceeds will go to a hospital or organization that benefits children with similar health issues.

Hatch is a former journalist and writer for Driscoll Life Magazine, which features stories about patients at Driscoll Children's Hospital in Corpus Christi. During her 15 years writing for the magazine, she interviewed children and families in all



Debra Young Hatch wrote the story inspired by a dream her husband had.

kinds of departments — neonatology, cancer, cardiology, physical therapy and more.

"I kept trying to find a way — how do I use that in a way that I can give back?" Hatch said. "What can you do with that experience and that skill?"

She said it took about four years to get For Kids' Sake up and running.

"Giraffes in My Closet" is dedicated to Heath Naumann, a 7-year-old Waco boy, who has a congenital heart defect. Hatch learned about Heath through his aunt, a realtor with whom Hatch worked.

"He's a true little heart hero," Hatch said. "He is just like that little engine that could."

See PUBLISHING, Page 6A

---

# Publishing

Continued from Page 1A

Heath has had four surgeries, the first of which came when he was 9 days old, said his mother, Lacy. His condition requires a series of three surgeries over the course of a few years, but Heath also underwent a “bonus” surgery when he was 2 years old to have a mechanical tricuspid valve installed. The family used to call him Tick-Tock Croc, in a reference to “Peter Pan,” “because when you hold his head open, he ticks,” Lacy said. His heart defect isn’t the most notable thing about him, Lacy said. She described Heath as “the life of the party,” an outgoing boy with a good sense of humor who loves “all the bad guys.”

His favorite movie characters are Darth Vader and Jack Skellington from “The Nightmare Before Christmas.”

Proceeds from “Giraffes in My Closet” will benefit Driscoll Children’s Hospital and Children’s Health Hospital in Dallas, where Heath has had all of his surgeries.

Hatch’s endeavor, Lacy said, is “amazing.”

“Congenital heart defects in children is one of the leading causes of death for kids, and it’s rarely spoken about,” she said. “Having somebody bring light to children’s illnesses and specific wings like a cardiac unit is a really great way to open a door and have a conversation.”

Lacy, who teaches physical education at Heath’s school, recently read “Giraffes in My Closet” to his class. She said his classmates thought he was a celebrity.

“Heath just feels like a little rock star,” she said. “It was really special. (Hatch) made a little kid’s day pretty big.”

Hatch has been making the rounds at local schools to read her book to students, share fun facts about giraffes and donate copies of her books to school libraries. She’s working on the second children’s book in what she hopes will be a trilogy.

“Giraffes in My Closet” is available for sale at Hatch’s website, [forkidsakepublishing.com](http://forkidsakepublishing.com), as well as Hanley-Wood in the Lamar Park shopping center and the Carousel Gift Shop at Driscoll Children’s Hospital.

Giraffe plush toys, playing cards and coloring books are also for sale at Hanley-Wood and online. Proceeds from those sales will also benefit the hospitals.



**Students at Hicks Elementary School got a visit from author Debra Young Hatch on Thursday. She read “Giraffes in My Closet,” which is the first book she’s published through her company For Kids’ Sake Publishing. RACHEL DENNY CLOW/CALLER-TIMES**

*Vicky Camarillo covers education, immigration and other issues in South Texas and the rest of the Lone Star State. Support local journalism with a subscription to the Corpus Christi Caller-Times.*

---