

Hitch A Ride On The Color Express

They say when God closes one door, he opens another. In author/illustrator Danielle Williams's case, he opened a full-sized stained glass window. Williams's children's book, *Hitch A Ride On The Color Express* will be published by Flying Ketchup Press in early October, and may be purchased at www.FlyingKetchupPress.com, area Target Stores, and Barnes and Noble.

It is a story about a little boy named Chuck, a creative but slightly messy little boy. In his room, he imagines his art becomes a train to The Colorful Places. With his friends Lion, Hippo, and Giraffe, he discovers that colors are something more than what he originally thought, and that your imagination can take you anywhere. Williams admits she used her son as a bit of a character sketch for the main character of the book.vvv

Williams has a BFA in Animation from the Massachusetts College of Art & Design. She has taught art as a Continuing Education instructor for the Kansas City Art Institute, and also taught art for private schools in both Massachusetts and Kansas. In 2016, she completed her Master's in Teaching and Learning. Now she is writing books for the very young readers, with an emphasis on kinetic learning and imagination.

"I had always wanted to write a children's book, but I didn't know what to write about. Then during my teaching years, I started to notice that the standard classroom curriculum for teaching to young children didn't work for every kid. It sparked an idea for a book," shared Williams.

Although she would work on the book from time to time, she didn't start to put it as a priority until she encountered one particular student who was struggling to learn his colors in kindergarten.

"Our classroom set-up for teaching colors completely failed that student, and at that point, I knew what my book was going to be about and how to write it," said Williams.

Granted she had her purpose and theme at that point, getting the book to the point of getting published took her a journey of 10 years.

"Originally I wanted the book to simply be a rhyming book about colors. I loved Dr. Seuss growing up. Green Eggs and Ham was my favorite book. I can remember the day it was read to us in school like it was yesterday. I couldn't wait to get to the library and check the book out to read it myself," said Williams. *Where The Sidewalk Ends*, and *Falling Up*, by Shel Silverstein are also two books that had a strong impact and influence on Williams.

"I loved the poem 'Something Missing' as a kid," recalled Williams citing her favorite poem by Silverstein.

Imitating Dr. Seuss rhymes pattern, Williams continued working on her book while teaching. That door started to close when she was diagnosed with breast cancer.



“I continued teaching during my first round of treatments and the cancer briefly went into remission. It was then that I really started to concentrate on my book. I had it completed, the writing, in a short amount of time,” shared Williams. Her cancer treatment was working well and stabilized her.

“That’s when I met Polly McCann. It was 2015-16, and I was teaching secondary art classes at Maranatha. I had asked Polly to do the illustrating for me. Polly read the book. She said it was good but needed some work, and we would talk about it at another time. So, I started rewriting the book,” replied Williams.

In 2018, Polly McCann opened Flying Ketchup Press in North Kansas City. She approached Williams about publishing her book.

“I was thrilled! We’d gone out for coffee, and sitting there at the table we talked about publishing the book,” said Williams. She showed Polly the rewrite. Polly said they would need to work together more on fine tuning the writing. However, she wanted Williams to do the illustrations for it.

With faith, prayer, and the determination pushing her onward to finish and publish her book, Williams continued while undergoing cancer treatment.

“I decided to work on the illustrations while I was working on fine tuning the writing with Polly. She taught me how to look at the writing through the eyes of the reader, and not just through my eyes,” explained Williams.

Although the writing of the book had taken some time, Williams admitted that it was actually the illustrating that she found the most challenging.

“I tried doing it digitally at first. The first time I had completed part of it, and then the computer crashed. Nothing was retrievable. The second time I had gotten farther digitally illustrating the book. I was very comfortable using the software I had, and was able to really finely define the illustrations. Then the software I was using stopped working and was not able to be upgraded or replaced. Again, everything I had done was non retrievable. Another year of work and time gone,” said Williams.

Williams met with McCann to discuss how best to continue with the illustrations, McCann suggested cutting out the illustrations instead of creating them digitally.

“Working with Polly in the studio, I cut out the paper illustrations. I had done that type of work in college cutting out paper for animations. This time the illustrations had to be cut out and taped onto the paper, not an animation board. It turned out beautifully. It was difficult and very detail oriented, but it was a true artist’s work. Polly has a big heart, she was so supportive through the entire process,” said Williams.

The final rewriting was completed in April of 2021. Not only was Williams told by McCann that her book was now ready to be published, she was also told by her doctors that her cancer was back in remission. A dual celebration she completely cherished.

Although she no longer teaches in the private or public sector, Williams does homeschool her son. She enjoys journaling and does it on a daily basis in the quiet hours of the morning.

“I’ve been very lucky and had very supportive people with me on this journey. My mother has always been my strongest supporter,” stated Williams, “My husband and son, too, have also always supported my writing.”

Now with the support of Flying Ketchup Press and Polly McCann, her dreams and goals have become realities. She is a published author.