Local Children's Book Author Finds New Ways to Give Back

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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HIGHLAND - A local author is giving back to veterans, kids and cancer patients while sharing stories that matter.

Madison County author Bella Spark published her first children's book, "Sparky Makes Friends," earlier this year. Now, she's preparing to publish her third book. During October, 20% of all sales go to Siteman Cancer Center to support patients. But she's taking it a step further with "Spark Kits" and The Rolling Honor Project, which aims to help veterans and kids facing challenges.

"It has just exploded into confidence-building and kindness missions," Spark said. "It's really opened up a whole whole new life for me."

Spark and her husband purchased a red Jeep a few years ago. They tried off-roading and joined a Jeep club, which began a new passion for Spark. She loves traveling in the Jeep, named Sparky.

Meanwhile, she had always wanted to write a children's book. Her newfound confidence inspired her to give it a try.

"Sparky Makes Friends" and "Sparky: Different is His Superpower" have proven to be popular titles for young readers. "Sparky and Pop's Big Book of Adventures" is an activity book. Spark is excited to introduce a third book about neurodivergence later this year.

As Spark's dreams of writing came true, she became interested in giving back. She started making "Spark Kits," comfort kits for cancer patients, remembrance kits and kits for neurodivergent kids. The goal, she explained, is to share "sparks of gratitude" — handwritten notes of kindness and encouragement.

To recognize Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Spark is also donating 20% of all proceeds in October to Siteman Cancer Center in St. Louis. She hopes this helps families like hers, as her mother is going through cancer treatment. She encourages people to do their holiday shopping early to donate.

But Spark is maybe proudest of The Rolling Honor Project, a new initiative she started to support veterans like her father. She remembers her grandfather, a World War II vet, would often try to tell his stories to the family's children; as a kid, Spark wasn't interested. Now, she recognizes the value of sharing these stories and wants to record them for other families.

"I would like to collect people's stories because I believe everybody has a story, and that's our legacy," she said. "That's kind of my end goal. Honestly, I'd love to just get in Sparky and drive around the country and collect people's stories and publish them or feature them and just get that message out there."

Spark is still deciding what the future looks like, but it's important to her to share these stories. She is also promoting Honor Flights for veterans — Spark joined her father on his Honor Flight and found it to be "so emotional" — and working to compile those "sparks of gratitude" for VA homes across the region.

As Spark grows Bella Spark Books, she emphasized that the goal is to give back. She hopes she can spread a message of kindness and community service through her writing.

“It’s more just publishing people’s stories and helping people get their stories out there. I don’t know that I intend to turn into a huge publishing company,” she added. “But definitely keep the stories coming and the community service and giving back. That’s really just what it’s about for me.”

For more information, visit the official website.