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Local author pens humor book on Minnesota's peculiarities

by Meghan Dusek

Contributing Writer Aug 11, 2009

SHOREVIEW — Carol McLean is one example of someone who takes the lemons, sweetens them with Minnesota nice, and emerges with lemonade.

During the lull in the publishing market, the Shoreview mother of three, a freelancer writer, editor and proofreader has written and released "Meet My Pet, Peeves," a compilation of 25 humorous articles — some of which touch on the peculiarities of living in Minnesota.

"I've always enjoyed writing short, humorous articles, but trying to get published in a magazine these days is really tough," McLean said via e-mail. "I finally realized that it would be better to combine my short articles into my own book."

The articles include headings like "43 Things to Know About Minnesota" in which the lifelong resident discusses what it means to go "up north," makes fun of singular city names and riffs on the seasons (i.e. road construction, and winter). Other topics include clogged closets, aging, email, April Fools, the trauma of teaching teens to drive, turning clutter into "collections" and dealing with cell phones when technologically impaired.

They illustrate McLean's assertion that — for her, at least — "the best kind of humor is good, clean fun." Because authors can spend months, even years shopping for a publisher, McLean took a different road by self-publishing using www.lulu.com, a site to which writers can upload their work for free. From there, Lulu takes a flat rate on each book that is printed, and the author decides the final price above the flat rate. She describes the process as personal, efficient and cost-effective.

"If you have an idea sitting in a drawer, get going on it. This is a fantastic time to publish," she said. But even self-publishing, she warns, isn't quick.

"Writing is hard work," she said, commiserating with writers everywhere. "You have to write even if you don't feel like writing, just as other people have to do their jobs even when they would rather take the day off."

She also recommends hiring someone who is familiar with uploading files to ensure that formatting and design elements stay consistent.

With the publication of "Meet My Pet, Peeves," she's already working on a sequel and planning to finish a children's fictional book within the next few months. But writing is only one of her many hobbies.

McLean has founded several out-of-the-ordinary area groups. In 2006, she started the Como Book Club through which members meet monthly to discuss books they've read and to make recommendations — with no group reading required. She is also the director of Unicycle Central of Minnesota, which teaches people of all ages to ride a unicycle.

"Unicycling is a great sport — challenging and fun, with a lot of variety," she said. "It's inexpensive and something that entire families can do together."

As a side project of Unicycle Central, she's starting a new group called Tapline. "It's a mixture of other forms of dance and is done with tap shoes to a variety of music," she said.

For aspiring writers, McLean offers a simple piece of advice: "Git 'er done."

It's clear from watching her juggle work, family, unicycling and more that that's something that she applies to her own life.

"Meet My Pet, Peeves" is available at www.lulu.com for \$9.95. For more information about any of McLean's projects or organizations, email her at unicyclecentral@hotmail.com.

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