

The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration
The Grannie Annie Extension Activities

Young People Learning and Sharing Family Stories www.TheGrannieAnnie.org

Hosting a Book Signing for Your Student Authors

Brian Billings, LEAP (Learning Enrichment and Acceleration Program) teacher at Fallen Timbers Middle School in Whitehouse, Ohio, decided to host an Authors' Night to honor the school's students (more than twenty of them!) whose stories have been published in Grannie Annie over the past six years. His decision was influenced by a few of the school's authors who had attended the annual author reading / book signing in St. Louis, and had reported it to be a wonderful experience.

The Grannie Annie Book-Signing Guide (available from The Grannie Annie upon request) provided basic information for planning and carrying out the event. Some adaptation was necessary, however, since the Guide is specifically geared to an event held in a bookstore.

Because people at Fallen Timbers wanted to hold their Authors' Night while school was still in session—and because they didn't begin to publicize the event until late April—they decided to begin on a relatively small scale. They sent invitations home to school families and included a tear-off slip so that people could pre-order the Grannie Annie books they wanted to buy. Pre-ordering helped Brian know how many copies to order from The Grannie Annie. Although some people offered to pay for the books when they placed their order, Brian decided to collect all of the money on Authors' Night. Everyone who placed an order followed through with their purchase, and six additional copies (which had not been pre-ordered) were purchased on Authors' Night.

Student authors were given a choice about how they shared their story at Authors' Night. About half of them read part of their story aloud, and the others simply told a little about the story, including the background. All of the authors published this year took part in the program, and some students published in prior years attended for a portion of the evening.

Brian—as well as parents and student authors—considered the Authors' Night to be very successful. The event recognized the authors and their publication, and gave them a chance to share their story with an audience.

Brian plans to make Authors' Night an annual event at Fallen Timbers. He says that in the future he would announce the date earlier (to possibly avoid schedule conflicts) and would vigorously promote the event for at least a month. Now that he knows the basic logistics of hosting an Authors' Night, he feels he can expand the event, inviting members of the community outside the school.

Sharing Stories with School and Community

Joan Baker, paraprofessional assistant at E. L. Ross Elementary School in Cleveland, Tennessee, found many ways to celebrate students' family stories in their school and community. Notice that Ross Elementary

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celebrated *all* of the stories written, not only those selected by The Grannie Annie for publication or honorable mention. Joan describes the components of Ross Elementary's celebration:

- Some of the third graders at our school wrote family stories, even though they were too young to submit their stories to The Grannie Annie [open only to fourth through eighth graders]. These students have a head start on next year's submissions.
- Each of the nineteen authors read his or her story over the school intercom — one each morning. Some other students in the school were inspired to write family stories and share them as well.
- I submitted the stories, along with a photo of each individual student author, to the *Cleveland Daily Banner*. The paper printed the photos and stories — one or two a week — on its School/Campus page. People all over town commented on how much they enjoyed the stories.
- "My Legacy Hall of Fame" — a bulletin board display in the hallway — included each student's laminated picture and story from the *Daily Banner*.
- The author at our school whose story was published by The Grannie Annie received special recognition at the Awards Day for 5th grade. He autographed a copy of the book that includes his story and presented it to the school library.
- I made books that included all of the Grannie Annie stories written by students in our school. Each book has a laminated color cover patterned after the cover on the actual *Grannie Annie* anthologies. Inside, each story has a title page that includes a picture of the student writing his or her story. The book also includes copies of family memorabilia relevant to the students' stories, and the congratulatory letter and news release about the student whose story was accepted for publication by The Grannie Annie. Each of the student authors received a copy of this book to keep. Each teacher also received a copy so that she could refer to the stories next year, as students are writing more family stories for The Grannie Annie. In addition, we put copies of the book in school waiting areas — in our own school and in the district administration building. I have already seen many people looking through the book here at Ross. The books are lovely, and everyone was so excited about getting a copy.

This year only students in the enrichment class submitted stories to The Grannie Annie. Now that everyone in the school has heard and read the stories that were submitted this year — and has begun discovering their own family stories — we're likely to have all fourth and fifth graders participate next year.

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Scrapbooks and Quilts

Laura Amburgey, Gifted Resource Teacher at Anthony Wayne Schools in Whitehouse, Ohio, has her students follow their Grannie Annie interview and writing with the design of scrapbook pages and quilt squares. Although Laura refers to a “grandparent” in her descriptions below, these activities could follow interviews with any family storykeeper.

Scrapbook pages

After my students have interviewed their grandparent, they design two scrapbook pages based on what they learned about their grandparent. They put their essay on one page and create a design around that, and on the other they put old photos of their grandparent, other pictures, clip art, etc. I provide the scrapbook supplies: punches, stickers, paper, glue, vellum, etc., and sometimes the students bring in other things that go along with the theme of their story. The final pages are beautiful, and many students give the pages to their grandparent. As a class, we put the pages into scrapbooks and display them in the hall with the quilt (see below) on an antique tablecloth so that the whole school can browse through them.

Quilt squares

The first year I did the quilt, I had two members of the local quilt club come in with sewing machines, ironing boards, the whole bit — and they made an actual quilt. The students designed quilt blocks from white muslin using fabric crayons, markers, permanent pens, etc. They designed their square with their grandparent’s last name, and illustrations and dates to represent what they found out about their grandparents and their heritage. I still have that quilt hanging in my classroom today. Since I see each class only once a week, that project took a little longer than I had expected, so for the last two years, I’ve just ordered a basic package of quilt squares from The Oriental Trading Company (www.orientaltrading.com) and the students put the squares together by using a variety of colored ribbon. At the end of the project they have their essay, scrapbook pages, and quilt square to take home and share with their family. They are very proud of their work.

The Grannie Annie and Grandparents' Day

The Grannie Annie and Grandparents’ Day are a natural combination. And many kinds of activities are possible. (The very mention of “stories” to grandparents is likely to prompt the sharing of more stories on the

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spot.) Beverly Miller, fifth grade English teacher from Advent Episcopal School in Birmingham, Alabama, used Grandparents' Appreciation Day as an occasion to recognize student authors as well as to honor grandparents.

Hundreds of grandparents from all across the country attend our annual Grandparents' Appreciation Day in May. Along with school tours, an art show, and a reception, we make our regular chapel service extra special. The chapel service was the perfect occasion to recognize our school's published authors. I presented them with their certificates and showed the book that includes their stories. It was a wonderful opportunity to let the grandparents know we love them and have honored their stories through our writing.

Making a Grannie Annie Person Book

Linda Relerford—a Grannie Annie volunteer and recent board member, and a longtime educator in the St. Louis Public Schools—highly recommends this creative art project that will complement your Grannie Annie unit.

Go to www.youtube.com and in the search bar type “Person Book.” The resulting video titled “Person Book,” from teacheronlineclasses.com, tells what materials are needed, and gives very clear visual and oral directions as to how this simple book is made. As your students are making their books, you can prompt them to think about the family member they wrote about in their Grannie Annie story. They then will decorate their Person Book so it represents that person. The next step is for students to rewrite their story on the pages that you staple inside the book, inside the paper-person's jacket flaps.

Linda has successfully used this art activity with 1st through 8th graders and in various contexts, including ABC pages, biographies, autobiographies, and poems.