

# KIDS IN PRINT

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## Drawing and writing books with Charise Mericle Harper

By The Kid Made Crew

Charise Mericle Harper has created over 50 books for children. That's a whole lot of books! She came to Sisters Elementary School, thanks to The Roundhouse Foundation.

At an assembly, she talked about creativity, books and pets, among other things. Then Charise taught workshops where Sisters students could learn from her experience. Her advice was practical, such as, "You have to make rules for your characters. Otherwise your story won't make sense."

Charise has authored many series of books and graphic novels, like "Just Grace," "Fashion Kitty," "Next Best Junior Chef," "Sasquatch and Aliens," and "Crafty Cat."

She is a mom, too. She lives with her family in Milwaukie, Oregon.

The author was interviewed by Kid Made Camp students Kennedy Davis, Evelyn Berray, and Gusty Berger-Brown, along with their journalism teacher, T. Lee Brown. The interview has been edited for space and clarity.

**Kennedy:** First, what kind of books do you like to write?

**Charise Mericle Harper (CMH):** I write picture books, which I find harder because I'm very chatty. My favorite thing to do is comics, like graphic novels. But I do chapter books, too, and that's fun.

**Kennedy:** What do you like to read?

**CMH:** Actually, I like to read a lot of nonfiction: sciencey stuff I find really interesting. I also listen to a lot of books

on tape, because when I walk my dogs it's a good way to listen to stories. When I'm reading something for fun, I want it to be something that takes me away, like an adventure story.

**Gusty:** Where do you do your work?

**CMH:** I have an outdoor studio called The Noodle, and it's a converted food truck. That's my own studio that no one else can go to, which is nice. Sometimes I work in the house, at the kitchen table, too.

**Evelyn:** How do your cats help you work?

**CMH:** You know what, that's a perfect question. I'll tell you why: the next book I'm writing is about my dogs and one of my cats. It's called "Pepper and Boo," which are the names of the dogs. In the story, the cat is super-smart and the dogs always get confused. The super-smart cat kind of ignores the dogs, and the dogs make up giant scenarios about the cat.

The dogs are like, "What does it mean when the cat sleeps on my bed? Does it mean it's mad at me?" The cat's just like, "No, it just



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK/OUTLAWS PHOTOGRAPHY

Graphic novelist, illustrator, and writer Charise Mericle Harper (right) was interviewed by Sisters kids on the elementary school lawn.

means it's the best bed." [Everyone giggles.] So I'm really excited to write those books. It's going to be fun.

**Gusty:** What book are you most proud of?

**CMH:** Ummm, I'm really excited about "Bad Sister," which is the graphic novel about all the bad things I did to my brother growing up. I've never done an autobiographical story before, and I really enjoyed working on that. It's not out yet.

**Gusty:** What's the most famous of your books?

**CMH:** Probably the Just Grace series, because it's been all over the world, in different countries, different languages. Also, the book's been out for a long time, so it's had a chance to travel the world. I wish I could travel to all the places the book went.

**T:** Did you get encouragement from teachers or family to pursue becoming a graphic novelist and author?

**CMH:** Not so much. In school they said that I was a good writer, but mostly my

parents were upset that I couldn't spell very well and felt that I wasn't trying hard enough. I think if I was tested today they would say I was slightly dyslexic.

As for being an artist—my parents weren't that interested. Both my parents came from Europe and they'd never gone to college, so they wanted me to go to college and get a business degree. Now I think my parents think it's kind of cool that I get to do this.

**Kennedy:** Do you have any advice for people who want to become authors?

**CMH:** It would say read as much as you can, and read as many kinds of books as you can, because then you will see how other people write stories, and your brain will take all that information, and it will help you figure out what is it you want to do.

Sometimes you can be inspired by seeing another book that somebody wrote in a certain way, not that you're going to copy it.

**Gusty:** There's only one more question. [Jumps up and yells happily] How do you write such awesome books?

**CMH:** Thank you! I don't know. I guess I just keep going.



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**Kids in Print Mission:** Kids are the readers, writers, and leaders of tomorrow. We're passionate about getting them involved with print media — as both creators and readers. Expressing themselves in their local newspaper empowers children and teens, and connects them with their community. Through educational events with our sponsor, Kid Made Camp, the youth of Sisters Country learn hands-on artistic, literary, and critical-thinking skills.

**Submit to Kids in Print:** Bring your original illustrations, paintings, stories, and poems on down to The Nugget! (442 E. Main Ave., 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri.) Include child's name, grade level, and school or homeschool. You can use a full name, or just first name with last initial. Submissions are also accepted by email, kidsinprint@nuggetnews.com, or at the front office of Sisters Elementary School. Please put them in a clearly marked envelope or clip on a cover sheet reading: "The Nugget - Kids in Print."

Due to space limitations, publication of submissions is not guaranteed. We seek to showcase a wide range of ages, styles, and abilities that represent the diverse talents of the youth of our greater Sisters community.

**Privacy Statement:** The Nugget Newspaper LLC does not ask children to disclose more personal information than is necessary for them to participate in Kids in Print. The Nugget limits its collection of information from children to non-personally identifiable information (e.g. first name, last initial, age, school).

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**Contributors: The Kid Made Crew, this month featuring Evelyn Berray, Gusty Berger-Brown, T. Lee Brown, and Kennedy Davis. Additional contributions from Lucie W., Ronin, and the Deschutes Land Trust hikers.**

Want to join the crew?  
Contact t@kidmadecamp.com.

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