



A New Fairy Comes to Town ~

A Talk with the Creators of the Locally Published Fairy Book, *Aprilmae Gets Carried Away!*

Photos by Doug Russell

Rachel Pastiva: Can you summarize the storyline of *Aprilmae Gets Carried Away*?

Diane Friese: Aprilmae is a story about a creative spirit and how a creative spirit can sometimes take us over the top! Most importantly, *Aprilmae Gets Carried Away!* is the story of a community coming together and celebrating their differences and their individuality.

Susan Russell: The storyline follows a well-intentioned Aprilmae on her annual painting mission to fill Fairie Fae with beautiful spring colors. She then attempts to take her talents to the human world, but learned they don't appreciate all of her colorful endeavors. Aprilmae seeks advice from her fellow fairies and Mother Alannah, the Wise Earth Mother. She learns why her artistry was not welcome, and what she must do to repair the harm she had inadvertently caused.



Creators of the new book, *Aprilmae Gets Carried Away* --- (from left to right) Susan Russell, Daniele O'Brien, and Diane Friese.

“My heart lies with nurturing our little ones in the school environment. I am a huge proponent of public education and readying our newest little citizens for a better world.” ~ Diane Friese

“For 33 years, I taught students with significant special needs. I loved working with these young people, helping them become as independent and responsible as possible.” ~ Susan Russell

“It's been wonderful having these two women in my life. The three of us have common interests and passions.” ~ Daniele O'Brien

RP: I love the main character's name "Miss Aprilmae June". As there are three of you responsible for creating the book, can you speak a little on the process of writing it together?

Diane Friese: Eating and laughing was an integral part of the process.

Susan Russell: Each one of us contributed in unique ways. The story concept was Diane's, and she asked me to co-write this book with her, knowing I am a word nut. She and I pretty much wrote the story word-by-word. Diane offered her fabulous illustrations, and I was the primary editor. Then we asked Daniele to join us. As a talented graphic designer, she provided the final steps in formatting and preparing the manuscript for publication. The process was fascinating, challenging and rewarding. It was amazing how well our varied abilities meshed together.

Not a small factor in the process was all the laughter, singing, and silliness that went into it. Oh, yes, and lots and lots of food.

RP: On your website, screendoorpublishing.com, it says you are looking forward to writing a follow up book. Is a new book already underway, and do you imagine there will be even more in the series? Will the next book also focus on Aprilmae, or will there be a new character introduced?

Diane Friese: A new fairy book is underway. The story takes place in the western part of our magical land where the fairies help to protect the environment and remind humans that they are a part of an awe inspiring natural world. Aprilmae's friend, July, will make a return appearance.

RP: It's no secret that fairies are a very big deal in Ann Arbor. Can you speak on why these magical beings are such good role models for our children?

Diane Friese: Fairies have taken many forms in many cultures. We hope our wee fairies tip-toe their way into the hearts and imaginations of children and help them begin to be exposed to some important issues.

Susan Russell: This is a very thought-provoking question! Fairies touch and engage the child's imagination. They are tiny replicas of humans, (except for the wings, of course), and children love miniature playthings. Lastly, they have magical powers as we all wish we had. As a little girl, I was fascinated by Peter Pan's Tinkerbell. I was certain she had sprinkled me with fairy dust, and I would be able to fly!

RP: How did the idea of Screen Door Publishing come about? What is the meaning behind its name?

Diane Friese: My sister-in-law keeps an old green door in her garden. My mother repeatedly encouraged me to write a story about a magic kingdom existing on the other side. After doing a little research on the name "green door" I found that it was the name of a song from the 50's which referred to activities inappropriate for children! Still, we liked the idea for Screen Door Publishing and the introduction for our first book, *Aprilmae Gets Carried Away!*

Susan Russell: The title of our company, Screen Door Publishing, came from the introduction of *Aprilmae Gets Carried Away*, in which the "screen door" leads to Fairie Fae, the magical land of fairies. Diane, who conceptualized and illustrated the story, suggested the name and the logo for our company, and Danni and I loved it!

RP: How long have you been friends, and how did you all meet?

Daniele O'Brien: I've known Susan Russell since college. We lived in the same dorm, Goodison, at Eastern Michigan University. We lived together all through our early college years.

I met Diane through Susan several years ago. Last summer Suzy, Diane, and I went up north for a long weekend. That was the first time I spent much time with Diane. We spent our ladies weekend singing, shopping, touring, and spitting cherry pits, and a bond was formed!

Diane Friese: Susan I have been friends for about 15 years. We met when our sons were running track and cross country at Saline High School.

Susan introduced me to her long time friend, Danni, while we were on a women's weekend trip to Glen Arbor. Together we shared a great weekend of singing, dancing and general silliness. We have been fast friends ever since.

Susan Russell: Danni and I have known each other since we met in the dorm at Eastern Michigan University. Our friendship developed over dorm water fights, roller-skating derbies, and singing Motown and show tunes.



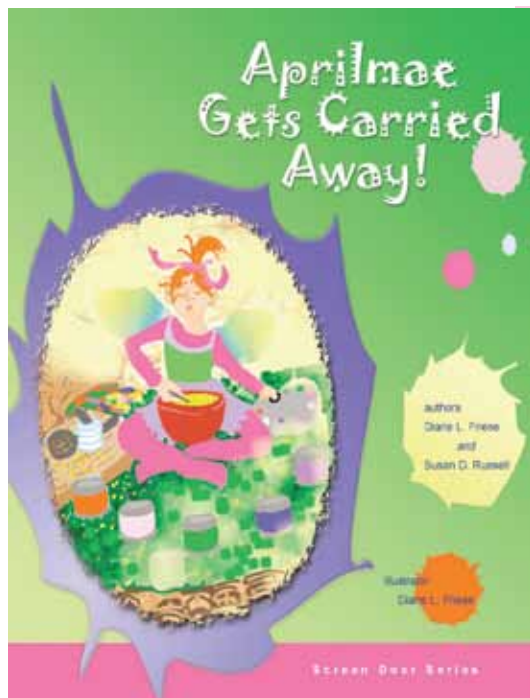
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As Diane said, she and I were devoted parents sitting on the bleachers, cheering on our sons in the cold and the rain. There was lots of rain!

RP: What do you (or did you) do for a living?

Daniele O'Brien: I'm a graphic designer.

Diane Friese: I am a retired educator. My area of interest and, really, my heart lies with nurturing our little ones in the school environment. I am a huge proponent of public education and readying our newest little citizens for a better world.



Aprilmae Gets Carried Away! written by local authors Diane Friese and Susan Russell. The beautiful illustrations were created by Diane Friese. Daniele O'Brien was the graphic designer.

The story involves a creative and caring painter fairy, Aprilmae, who loves to make the land of Fairy Fae more beautiful each year by renewing it with beautiful new spring colors.

But, alas, she eventually goes too far, and it gets her into trouble! How does she solve the problem, and who does she seek out for advice?

Susan Russell: For 33 years, I taught students with significant special needs, as an employee of the Washtenaw Intermediate School District in Ann Arbor. I loved working with these young people, helping them become as independent and responsible as possible.

RP: How has collaborating with friends on a children's book transformed your life?

Daniele O'Brien: It's been wonderful having these two women in my life. The three of us have common interests and passions. I think we bring out the best in each other, especially creativity with lots of laughter.

Diane Friese: Working with friends has taught me lessons in patience, sharing, and appreciation of individual styles. Mostly it has brought a great amount of love and laughter.



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Susan Russell: When I retired, I had no idea that my life would go in this direction. For me retirement was not just an ending but a beginning. I knew that I was a bit of a wordsmith, but did not envision that would lead me anywhere. I give credit and thanks to Diane, who recognized this and asked me to co-write the book with her. My longtime friend, Danni, fit perfectly into this process with her graphic designing skills. As a result, phenomenal experiences and people have become part of my life. I learned to be true to myself, and be open to the possibilities that life offers.

RP: What are some of your hobbies?

Daniele O'Brien: I garden, draw, collect glass to make garden totems, paint recycled tile trivets, make jewelry, read, and love walking. My current passion is creating Zentangles. I always have my sketch book with me and talk about Zentangles to anyone who will listen!

Diane Friese: Since retiring, I am very fortunate to be living my hobby!

Susan Russell: I love being with my family, gardening and nature, reading, walking, crafting, crossword puzzles, and the arts. Not to mention hanging out with the terrific friends who are in my life. Oh, yes, and writing!!

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(Visit www.screendoorpublishing.com for upcoming events and future releases or email the creators individually: Daniele O'Brien: dobriendesign@comcast.net; Diane Friese: dianefriese47@yahoo.com; Susan Russell: rsooz68@yahoo.com)



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