

Published April 12th, 2023

Lafayette mom writes endearing kids' book, 'Good Night, Sweet Peas'

By Diane Claytor



Lafayette author Amy Landgraf reads "Good Night, Sweet Peas" to Happy Valley Elementary School second graders. Photo provided

favorite veggie. "They're easy to grow and my kids love them," Landgraf says. They also became her inspiration.

One day, her then 3-year-old son was enjoying a plate of peas, although, as expected, most inevitably ended up on the floor. Looking at the peas rolling all over the kitchen, Landgraf remembers exclaiming, "Roly-poly peas are everywhere." As soon as she said that out loud, she recalls, "I thought OMG, that could be my story's main character." Thus, Rollie Pollie Pea came to life.

Like most children, Landgraf's kids were always looking for ways to delay their bedtime. With that in mind, and the desire to write a book that was both relatable and humorous, "Good Night, Sweet Peas," a sweet, funny, rhyming story about Rollie Pollie Pea and his siblings trying to avoid bedtime, was created.

Landgraf quickly learned that writing, illustrating, publishing and selling a children's book has many challenges. Once written, she began searching for an illustrator who could match her visions. It took longer than expected. She finally found Carlos Valenti, an experienced Disney animator and illustrator, who had also worked with Marvel Comics, Warner Brothers and Universal Studios. "As soon as he sent me a sample drawing of Rollie Pollie Pea, I knew I had found the perfect illustrator. You just know when it feels right," Landgraf reports.

It was an eight-month process getting the book so beautifully illustrated. The drawings are vibrant. Rollie Pollie Pea and his four adorable siblings, as well as their surroundings, come to life in brilliant color. And Landgraf says she couldn't be happier.

Landgraf had planned to go the traditional route getting the book published until she realized she would lose some control over the creative. She had a vision and knew what she wanted. So she started her own publishing company, Rad Plaid Publishers, and hopes to eventually publish other authors and illustrators.

With boots on the ground, as Landgraf describes, she began selling "Good Night, Sweet Peas." Wanting to support the local community, she went to small, independent bookstores, meeting with store owners and managers, pitching her charming children's book. She succeeded. "Good Night, Sweet Peas" is currently available at Lafayette's Reasonable Books, Bel and Bunna Books, and Orchard Nursery's Lazy K, as well as bookstores in Danville and Berkeley. It's also available on Landgraf's website amylandgraf.com.

Landgraf will be reading and signing books during an Earth Day celebration at 12:30 p.m. April 23 at Hollie's Homegrown in Lafayette.

Growing up in Southern California, Amy Landgraf had a dream. "I always wanted to write a children's book. After being inspired by so many wonderful children's books when I was young," she said, "I knew I wanted to write books to inspire others. It's been my lifelong dream," she says. And with the release of her acclaimed children's book, "Good Night, Sweet Peas," her wish has come true.

A big question could be how did the busy Lafayette mom of three active kids ever find time to write this delightful story? "I'm often burning the midnight oil," she admits. "But when you're passionate about it, you find the time to pursue your dreams." Landgraf is a substitute teacher, second grade teacher's aide, room mom and writes a column for a local monthly publication.

Working a full-time job in sales and marketing for many years, Landgraf was never quite able to find the time to fulfill her childhood fantasy. But she never stopped thinking about it. Then COVID hit and everything came to a halt. She suddenly had the time, but hadn't quite figured out the main character.

With more time at home and a plant donated by a neighbor, the Landgrafs decided to start a family vegetable garden. It turned out that peas became the

Lafayette mom Kim Roth read "Good Night, Sweet Peas" to her two toddlers and reports they couldn't stop giggling as they got to the surprise ending of the book and, at their insistence, she read it another three times in a row.

The book reviewer Readers Choice Book Awards wrote, "Beautifully written in rhyme with bright, vibrant illustrations, this book will become a bedtime favorite for children and adults alike!"

"Good Night, Sweet Peas" is the first in a series of Rollie Pollie Pea books. The next one, "Cool to be You," a book about inclusivity and celebrating our differences, is expected out in the fall. There are another six books, mostly written, in Landgraf's inventory, so Rollie Pollie Pea will no doubt become a long-time friend.

And Landgraf has even bigger visions for Rollie Pollie Pea. She hopes he'll become a beloved children's favorite. She has plans for creating merchandise and is even hoping to someday bring Rollie Pollie Pea to life through an animated TV series.

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