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EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY



Local teen illustrates children's book with a positive message

BY TERRY FITZWATER
PUBLISHER

Piper Colston is living a dream.

Colston is a 14-year-old Riviera High School student who has loved drawing and art all of her young life. Last year, she was approached by Rhonda Yaklin, a teacher in the

Riviera ISD, to illustrate John Brubaker children's book entitled *Roady Kangaroo Moves Forward*. The book is about always trying to do your best, with the theme of 'Chin up, chest out, move forward'. Colston agreed to do the project, and ever since then, the project has taken her on a unique jour-

ney.

"Rhonda Yaklin suggested that I write a children's book," Brubaker said. "I have written a number of books before, but never a children's book. I was dubious at first, and was hesitant to do it.

"But she is a force of nature, and persuaded

me to do it. When I told her I didn't know anyone who could illustrate a children's book, she surprised me when she said 'I know a student who can do it.'"

That student was Piper Colston.

"I've always liked drawing," Piper said. "I've liked drawing since I was

2 or 3-years-old. When Mrs. Yaklin asked me if I would be interested in illustrating a children's book, I was surprised but excited. I said yes, but I didn't know what I was getting myself into."

The book's theme is a message to children that no matter what happens to them, you still must

move forward with your chin up and chest out. When the theme of the book was explained to her, Piper did some preliminary drawings and forward them to Brubaker for his feedback. The more she got into the story, the more she understood the

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message. That's when she did something extraordinary.

"I suggested to Mr. Brubaker a different message in the art I was drawing, to make character's more understandable and believable," Colston said. "When he agreed to my ideas in the art, that's when the going got more challenging."

Colston started over and found herself more challenged then she had ever been in her young life.

"At first, it was solely about drawing, but I had no idea what it would lead

me to," she said. "I had no idea about the process of thought it would require, and it was very frustrating. At times, I felt like quitting because it was something that was way over my head. I asked myself many times, "Why did you think you could do this?" But the lesson I learned was that once you make a commitment, you have to honor that commitment and work as hard and as best as you can to fulfill that commitment.

"I think I've learned a valuable lesson because

of it, and looking back it makes me want to do more and take on bigger challenges."

Colston's epiphany on the illustrating journey made her metamorphose into a much larger and more mature understanding of life. As she read Brubaker's book, she began to understand the characters in the book and wanted to bring their uniqueness to life. Her expression of different characters pushing forward no matter what obstacles befell them changed her understanding of them

and herself.

"I grew exponentially as a person while doing this," Piper said, showing wisdom well beyond her years. "There was a definite lesson in all of this. The metamorphosis of understanding how you overcome the most difficult things in your life and still going forward was a valuable lesson for me to learn, and I think the book tells that story in a really positive way."

The young Piper is a wise young lady, and author John Brubaker can't sing her praises loud enough.

"I couldn't be more impressed with her, with the work she has done," Brubaker said. "She's just a few years removed from being the age of the targeted children's audience, but her mind and intelligence far surpass that of people much older.

"She is talented beyond her year's, and I can't wait to see what the future holds for her."

Piper remains philosophical about the project.

"I really am proud that I got to do this," she said. "I'm excited about the fu-

ture and what projects I might be able to take on. I've learned so much, and I absolutely love and believe in the theme of the book. I hope people and parents and even schools get the book to help teach children how to overcome adversity and keep moving forward. I can't thank Mr. Brubaker and Mrs. Yaklin enough for having faith in me and allowing me to take this wonderful and thoughtful journey through the process.

"I am excited to see where this takes me."