

Artist and Activist Kelly Parks Snider Launches a New Children's Book: Zilly

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Zilly is the signature character in [Kelly Parks Snider's](#) new modern day fable about a young flyer who soars high, swoops low but never goes in a straight line. In the story, Zilly tries to fit in with the straight flying crowd, but ultimately realizes the price of trying to be like everyone else is too high.

It's a message Snider learned early on from her own parents. In *Zilly's* dedication, Snider thanks her parents for encouraging her to scribble outside the lines. "I'm very grateful to my parents for always encouraging me to do things my way and not follow the crowd," she says.

Snider grew up in Omaha and earned a bachelor's degree in occupational therapy from the University of Kansas. She loved working as an occupational therapist but, after seven years in the field, she decided to stay at home with her four young children and concentrate on painting. In her first year, she submitted her artwork to be displayed at a local museum, and it was accepted. Her career took off, and she hasn't looked back since then.

When asked how she had the confidence and courage to submit her work for display early on in her career, she says, "I'm fearless. It's important to stay open to possibilities, and that means not being afraid of making mistakes because that's how we learn."

Along with video producer Jane Bartell, Snider also co-founded [Project Girl](#), a non profit program that uses art to help students identify and question the endless stream of negative messages targeted at them by the media and big advertising. These messages tell kids they will be better or more popular if they buy this or that or engage in certain types of behavior. Project Girl counters these messages by teaching kids to think critically, question everything, and figure out ways to change or improve upon the status quo.

Snider created *Zilly* as another tool she can use to share her message with younger children. As Zilly says, "I like being me, and I am the way I am supposed to be!" I encourage you to check out *Zilly: A Modern Day Fable* and the work of [Project Girl](#), and let me know what you think.

In our competitive, consumer driven culture, how do you teach your children to be true to themselves and march to the beat of their own drummers?

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 A p r **Britt Kloehn** said: , 2 0 1 2
Well, I don't have much of a choice. My 7-year-old daughter marches to the beat of her own drummer regardless of what anyone says. Right now her hair is dyed a temporary bright pink. She also dresses like an Olsen twin; nothing matches or has since she started dressing herself at age two. I actually used to worry about her, partly because she doesn't have a lot of girlfriends her age and has been bullied by

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the neighborhood girls. I remember even thinking: well, if she just wore decent outfits and acted more like the other girls, they would like her more. Now, however, my husband and I are just proud of who she is and how she looks, because she is herself and we love her. In fact, I am the one who dyed her hair (at her request, of course)!

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