

News Release

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Media Advisory

Activist-Artist-Author Kelly Parks Snider Launches GoatHouse Press with *Zilly*

“Zilly: A Modern-Day Fable” is a beautiful, playful children’s story that celebrates friendship and being true to one’s self

January 17, 2012 (Madison, Wisc.) Kelly Parks Snider, an activist, artist, author and co-founder of Project Girl, launches her new publishing company, GoatHouse Press, and its first title, *Zilly: A Modern-Day Fable*. Parks Snider is the book’s author and illustrator.

“Zilly’s world is a fanciful and fun celebration of the power of friendship and being true to one’s self; a story I believe readers of all ages will see themselves in,” said Parks Snider. “I wrote *Zilly* and created GoatHouse Press to meet children where they are, providing a springboard for young people and caring adults to have thoughtful dialogue about peer pressure, conformity, bullying and the role of media in our lives.”

Zilly: A Modern-Day Fable is the story of a wonderfully out-of-the-ordinary flyer who loves being quirky, spontaneous and free. Her best friend is a goat named Mingle who loves Zilly just the way she is. But the other flyers tease Zilly for being different, and her uniqueness and friendship are tested when she decides to take flying lessons for flyers who want to fit in (“No goats allowed!”).

“Advertisers spend billions each year in an effort to influence what our children look like, how they act, the values they adopt and what they care about. They target the youngest children in the most unconscionable ways,” said Lyn Mikel Brown, professor of Education and Human Development and Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies for Colby College and author of *Packaging Girlhood: Rescuing Our Daughters from Marketing Schemes*. “Enter *Zilly: A Modern-Day Fable*, a cautionary tale about loyalty and friendship in a world where conformity is king. With whimsy, courage and a healthy dose of good sense, Zilly flips and flaps her way through the commercial land fray, peeks behind the glitzy falsehoods and reminds us all what really matters in life: the sheer joy of being an original.”

Zilly is the outgrowth of Project Girl, a nationally recognized, award-winning program that combines art, media literacy and youth-led activism into a unique educational experience for children, parents and educators. Parks Snider co-founded Project Girl in 2004, and through her work with children of all ages all over the country, she was inspired to find more creative, innovative and engaging ways to communicate with younger children about the world around them. She created *Zilly* in response, but went further and founded GoatHouse Press with the intention of producing more titles that illuminate and inspire children to create their own culture and discover their own truth.

“Children’s books are powerful. With words and art, we create an away space for children. There seems to be very few spaces in our children’s lives where they can experience stillness,” said Parks Snider. “Good art and great books can open their eyes to new ways of seeing this world.”

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Zilly's release is timely. Parks Snider and Project Girl are partnering with Senator Kay Hagan, Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin and the Congressional Women's Caucus Task Group on Young Women in the sponsorship of the Healthy Media Youth Act. Currently under review in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee, the bill's purpose is to improve media literacy for youth and to encourage the promotion of healthier media messages about girls and women.

Parks Snider has been a professional artist for many years. *Zilly* is her first children's book (for more information, please see Parks Snider's bio in the media kit).

Zilly: A Modern-Day Fable is for sale at www.zillybook.com and Amazon.com. To see *Zilly* in your favorite independent bookstore, contact GoatHouse Press.

To interview Parks Snider or for a copy of *Zilly: A Modern-Day Fable* for review, please contact Ella Carlsson (information below).

About GoatHouse Press

GoatHouse Press, located in Madison, Wisc., is an independent publishing house dedicated to creating books with original insights and imagination. Founded by activist-artist-author Kelly Parks Snider, GoatHouse Press publishes children's literature that examines the complexities of contemporary kid culture, opening young readers' eyes to new ways of seeing this world. GoatHouse Press values taking risks and innovation, delivering books that illuminate and inspire children to create their own culture and discover their own truth. For more information, please visit www.goathousepress.com.

About Project Girl

Project Girl combines art, media literacy and youth-led activism into a ground-breaking initiative created to enable children to become better informed critical consumers of mass media advertising and entertainment—in other words, to become more media literate. Project Girl's unique approach uses art as the means to educate, inspire and create social change. Project Girl's workshops, educational materials and activities give young people the structure to be the producers of their own culture, not just passive receivers of a culture that is trying to sell them something. For more information, please visit www.projectgirl.org.

About The Healthy Media for Youth Act

The Healthy Media for Youth Act is a bill to improve media literacy for youth and to encourage the promotion of healthier media messages about girls and women. It takes a three-pronged approach to promote healthy media messages about girls and women. First, the bill creates a competitive grant program to encourage and support media literacy programs and youth empowerment groups. The bill also facilitates research on how depictions of women and girls in the media affect youth. Finally, it establishes a National Taskforce on Women and Girls in the Media, which will develop voluntary standards that promote healthy, balanced, and positive images of girls and women in the media for the benefit of all youth. For more information, please visit tammybaldwin.house.gov.

News Release

Zilly: A Modern-Day Fable
ISBN: 978-0-9840443-0-6
Hardcover, 32 pages, \$17.00
GoatHouse Press

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Kelly Parks Snider

ARTIST/AUTHOR/ACTIVIST/PUBLISHER

“I give everything to the creative process. I write and paint to create a character, express a thought or make a connection. I am not concerned about adhering to a specific style, medium or format. This allows me to be fully absorbed in asking: What are all the possibilities here? What I seek is to share a profound connection I feel with a character, an idea or an aspect of my life. My hope is that readers feel that connection as powerfully.”

Kelly Parks Snider explores contemporary cultural and social issues. Using art and words, she educates communities, stimulates dialogue about target issues and creates social change.

As a visual artist, Kelly’s work exhibits nationally through both public and private galleries. *Her Rural Women: Voice and Spirit* exhibit was funded in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Art Board and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Commercial Land Exhibition was the culmination of a two-year exploration of the effects of contemporary media on young teens’ lives and attitudes and is exhibited nationally.

Kelly is the co-founder of Project Girl (www.projectgirl.org), a nationally recognized non-profit, award-winning program and touring exhibition that combines art, media literacy and youth-led activism into a unique educational experience for children, parents and educators. Project girl was recently featured in *Family Circle Magazine* and was an awarded youth program in the new national youth empowerment and philanthropy program called *Best Buy’s @15 Change Exchange* project.

Kelly is also the founder of Goathouse Press, an independent publishing company dedicated to children’s literature that illuminates and inspires children to create their own culture and discover their own truth. *Zilly: A Modern-Day Fable* is Kelly’s first children’s book. She considers *Zilly* to be her protest book. She has also co-authored curriculum with Jane Bartell (co-founder of Project Girl) and Lyn Mikel Brown, Ed.D. (Professor of Education and Human Development at Colby College in Maine).

Activism is the foundation for all of Kelly’s endeavors. Her objective is to educate young people, parents, educators and communities about targeted issues in the hopes of shaking up the status quo, creating a catalyst, examining the questions that shape and inspire all of us. Her activism is rooted in a conviction that a healthy democracy depends on informed citizens, and our youth must be considered in this truth.

Kelly lectures nationally about media literacy, serves in artist-in-residence programs and produces workshops. She lives and works on a little farm outside of Madison, Wisconsin, with her husband and their four children.

Honors & Grants

2010 University of Wisconsin School of Business Women Executive Leadership Honor Recipient

2009 Best Buy@15 Change Exchange Partner

2009 Herzfeld Foundation

2009 Wisconsin Arts Education Association, Concerned Citizen of the Arts Award

2008 National Media Reform Conference Minneapolis, 2008

2008 Uniquely ME! Girl Scout Self-Esteem Program Grant

2008 Quixote Foundation

2007 Quixote Foundation

2006 J.J. Keller Foundation

2006 Quixote Foundation

2006 Ford Foundation

2004 Wisconsin Arts Board, National Endowment for the Arts

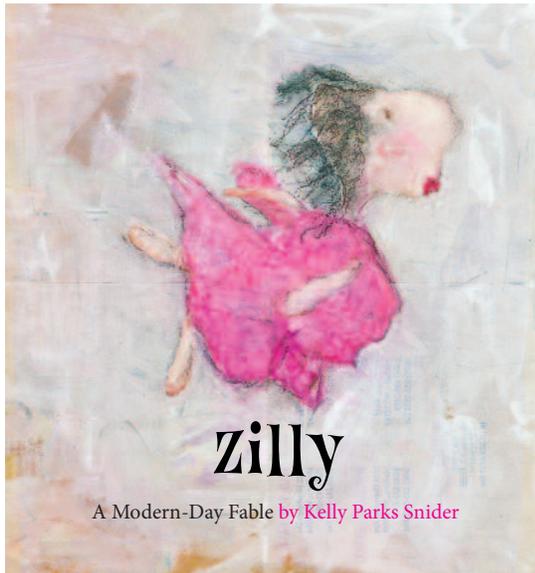
www.zillybook.com

www.projectgirl.org

www.kellyparkssnider.com

www.goathousepress.com

GoatHouse Press Madison, Wisconsin



GOATHOUSE PRESS

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Zilly: A Modern-Day Fable
written and illustrated by Kelly Parks Snider

“I like being me, and I am exactly the way I am supposed to be!”
—Zilly

Zilly: A Modern-Day Fable is the story of a wonderfully, out-of-the-ordinary flyer who loves being quirky, spontaneous, and free. Her best friend is a goat named Mingle who loves Zilly just the way she is. But the other flyers tease Zilly for being different, and her uniqueness and friendship are tested when she decides to take flying lessons for flyers who want to fit in (“No goats allowed!”).

The billboard promised that all flying lessons came complete with a nifty look-alike outfit, a book of easy-to-memorize flying routines, and a sparkly award.

Zilly gazed at the billboard and she gazed some more. Fitting in seemed so fashionable. And a nifty outfit seemed almost necessary. And who wouldn't want a sparkly award?

“This is it!” Zilly exclaimed. “If beautiful means being like all of you, then that is what I will do!”

Author and illustrator Kelly Parks Snider weaves together eclectic artwork and playfully poetic words to create this fanciful tale. Readers will see themselves in this modern-day fable that celebrates the power of friendship and being true to one's self.

Zilly is an outgrowth of Project Girl (www.projectgirl.org). Project Girl, co-founded by Kelly Parks Snider, is a nationally recognized, award-winning program that combines art and media literacy into a unique, educational experience for children, parents and educators. The book includes discussion questions for children and caring adults, providing a springboard to introduce thoughtful dialogue about peer pressure, bullying, and the role of media in our life.

Please visit www.zillybook.com for more information about *Zilly* and to find plenty of fun activities for kids such as coloring pages, a children's art gallery, information for parents, teachers, and librarians, and to learn more about Kelly.

Zilly: A Modern-Day Fable
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Hardcover, 32 pages, \$17.00
ORDER BOOKS: www.zillybook.com



Project Girl

BEGINNINGS In 2003, Kelly Parks Snider, a visual artist, and Jane Bartell, a video producer, led a series of pilot workshops that brought local (Madison, Wisconsin) artists, activists, academics, political figures, educators and healthcare providers together with a group of adolescent girl advisors to discuss the effects of media messages on their lives. Project Girl was born.

DESCRIPTION Project Girl is a national groundbreaking youth-led, arts-based initiative created to enable girls to become better informed critical consumers of mass media advertising and entertainment; in other words, to become more media literate.

WORKSHOPS AND TOOLS Young people are media's primary consumers and key targets. Utilizing art and video, Project Girl provides tools and trainings to help young people, educators, parents and communities better understand the motives of commercial media and to respond to those influences in a healthy way. Project Girl includes:

- Facilitated workshops for adolescent girls
- Facilitator training workshops for educators, girl-group leaders and girl allies
- Print and video curriculum and presentation materials
- Art posters and PowerPoint presentation
- The Project Girl Workbook: *A Guide to Unmediafying Your Life*
- The Project Girl DVD: *Video Reflections*

EXHIBITION The *Commercial Land Exhibition* is a thoughtful and provocative multi-media traveling public art exhibition that represents contemporary culture. The art is a protest encouraging audiences to examine and question the influences of the media and advertising on our lives. The art exhibit consists of mixed media canvases, sculptures, a multi-media art installation by Project Girl co-founder Kelly Parks Snider.

WHERE Project Girl workshops and exhibition have been held nationwide. They estimate they've reached thousands of young women through their workshops and the sharing of Project Girl materials.

SUPPORT Project Girl is supported by numerous state and government arts agencies as well as organizations like Best Buy's *@15 Change Exchange project*, the Dove Foundation and Quixote Foundation.

PARTNERS For a full list, visit projectgirl.org

- Lyn Mikel Brown, Ed.D., Professor of Education and Human Development at Colby College
- Congressional Women's Caucus Task Group on Young Women
- SPARK (www.sparksummit.com)
- Girl Scouts of the USA (www.girlscouts.org)
- Girls Inc. (www.girlsinc.org)
- Dove uniquely ME! (www.girlscouts.org/program/gc_central/leadership/uniquelyme)
- Hardy Girls Healthy Women (www.hghw.org)

"Project Girl, as an arts-based initiative, aspires to inspire girls to look at themselves—who they are and how they look—with new eyes. Project Girl helps them come to understand a broader definition of beauty than the mass media provides them with. Project Girl gives girls the tools to break codes and investigate ideas, to read and recognize messages and then re-write them for themselves."

Barbara Lawton
former Lt. Governor of Wisconsin

FOR MORE INFORMATION visit www.projectgirl.org or email kpsnider@charter.net

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ART MEETS

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TWO MOMS PROVE A LITTLE CREATIVITY GOES A LONG WAY IN EMPOWERING TEEN GIRLS.

By Stephanie Emma Pfeffer

Photography by Narayan Mahon

In 2004 a group of middle-school girls sat cross-legged in a Madison, Wisconsin, community center at one of Project Girl's first workshops. They took turns sharing objects they'd brought from home. A 13-year-old held up an empty cup and plate and explained the symbolism: "To be as skinny as the girls in magazines," she said, "you can't eat a thing."

Project Girl is an arts-based program that helps young women become aware of negative effects of media. "We want girls to turn a suspicious eye to messages being delivered by advertisements, magazines, television shows, websites and music," says co-founder and video producer Jane Bartell, 55. "By becoming independent thinkers who control their interpretation of the messages, they will no longer be controlled by them."

The inspiration for the program came from Jane's co-founder and friend, visual artist Kelly Parks Snider, 46. Married and with three teenage daughters—Madison, 19, Carly, 18, and Ellie, 17—as well as a 14-year-old son, Mitch, Kelly was baffled by her girls' experiences in middle school. "I couldn't believe their stories of bullying, girl-on-girl meanness and disrespect," she says. "It was so different from how I remembered my all-girls school environment: supportive, positive and encouraging."

Kelly mentioned her kids' struggles to Jane (they share a passion for art and activism and have been friends since Ellie and Jane's son Joe were in the same kindergarten class). Over the years they've spearheaded after-school drawing classes, taught art at homeless shelters and created a public

art exploration of rural women in agriculture and farming. "Art helps people look at things differently," says Kelly. "In this case, we wanted to provoke a dialogue about the challenges faced by today's young women."

Jane and Kelly learned all they could about what prompts girls to fight with each other, compete for boys' attention, obsess over their looks and express dissatisfaction with their bodies. "Females don't come out of the womb competing and bickering," says Jane, who still meets her high-school girlfriends weekly for coffee. "Those are learned behaviors."

Realizing they'd have to rely on experts for answers, the two moms headed to the library to study adolescent girl development. They scoured websites and contacted leading researchers who were eager to connect with a non-

KNOW SOMEONE WHO'S HELPING TO CHANGE YOUR COMMUNITY? Send details along with a photo to localhero@familycircle.com

Kelly Parks Snider (left) and Jane Bartell help girls express themselves through visual media.



Visit projectgirl.org for more information on curriculum, on-demand Web-based training programs, upcoming art exhibitions, events, and how to bring Project Girl to your community.

LOCAL HERO

academic community. “Kelly is such a good networker, she’d dial up the president of the United States if necessary,” jokes Jane.

One of the first experts they approached was Lyn Mikel Brown, Ed.D., author of *Packaging Girlhood: Rescuing Our Daughters from Marketers' Schemes* (St. Martin's Griffin), who told them advertisers were spending more dollars than ever targeting kids. “We learned they were being bombarded by 3,000 messages a day, whereas in the 1980s it was more like 1,500,” says Jane. The significant ramping up of messages probably contributed to how girls viewed themselves, Mikel Brown concluded. And things really had changed over the years. “When Joe and Ellie were born, the media was spending \$6.2 billion targeting kids,” says Jane. “By the time they were in kindergarten, the amount had nearly doubled.”

That's all Kelly and Jane needed to refine their mission and establish a solid goal. They would use art to help students recognize the marketing of false promises, and to resist them. But one component was still missing: kids' input. So Kelly and Jane reached out to local youth organizations like schools, art centers and community groups. “We tried to speak to girls who cared about the lives of other girls and wanted to share their thoughts on the media's effects,” says Kelly.

It was from this diverse group that the Project Girl advisory board was born. Twenty middle-school students promised to meet once a month for three to four hours—not just to learn but to help Kelly and Jane create a curriculum that would be engaging for future students. “Our advisory group taught us how to say things so other kids would understand,” says Jane. “They were crucial to the project, the true creators of change.”

The first challenge was getting these girls who were literally im-

mersed in mass culture to take a step back from the media and identify its damaging effects. “Initially they couldn't think of one positive relationship between girls, whether on television, in movies, books or songs,” says Kelly. Instead they described girls as mean gossips who fought over boys and cared more about how they looked than their own accomplishments. Kelly and Jane introduced a concept called “busting it”—identifying a media message that focuses on insecurity, then separating it from reality. For example, “busting” an ad of a scantily clad woman might involve a realization like, “This ad is trying to trick me by implying that if I look sexy and act provocatively, people will find me more attractive. But that's not true.”

Throughout the year the advisory board brought in items or advertisements that symbolized social pressures for things like beauty, thinness or sexiness. Impossibly perfect dolls, diet pills and inappropriate clothing were some of the objects that inspired art projects and eventually culminated in a collage titled “Commercial Land.” At the end of the nine-month workshop, the girls presented their art exhibition to family and friends. “Since the girls put the show together, it was a very real representation of what they cared about,” says Kelly.

That interactive experience became the program's foundation. Today, in addition to facilitated workshops for adolescent girls, Kelly and Jane offer training seminars for educators, as



The paper sculpture “Evidence of Real Bodies” depicts poor body image.

well as a traveling art exhibition, which includes pieces from the initial show along with works created by Kelly, Jane and other professional artists. Online tool kits and downloadable curriculum allow anyone who is interested in girls' self-esteem—scout troop leaders, church officials, after-school programmers, teachers—to train in media literacy. There is also a Project Girl website that incorporates teens' art, literature and poetry. Kelly



A young artist "talks back" through this collage, expressing how her life has been affected by the media.

and Jane estimate they've reached thousands of young women—it's tough to come up with an exact number because they don't track the use of their materials. Participants pass along what they've learned to others by holding their own workshops and seminars.

"AT HEART, THIS IS A GIRL-LED MOVEMENT," SAYS KELLY. "OUR STUDENTS CREATE VISUAL ART TO EMPOWER THEMSELVES AND THEIR PEERS TO IDENTIFY AND FIGHT HARMFUL MEDIA STEREOTYPES."

Although it's a grassroots effort, Jane and Kelly still spearhead the bulk of the program. Its rapid growth is both encouraging and challenging. The two are on the road several times a month leading workshops, setting up

the art exhibition or speaking to girl groups. Jane recalls one Saturday when they were expected to give a presentation in Iowa City at 9 a.m. and had planned to leave Madison Friday night. But when Ellie's school play was scheduled to open that evening, the women agreed to head out at 4 a.m. the next morning so Kelly wouldn't miss it. "Luckily, we know how to work well together," says Kelly. "When one of our lives gets busier, the other person works harder."

Project Girl receives support from numerous state and government arts agencies, as well as organizations like Best Buy @15, the Dove Foundation and Quixote Foundation. It has also partnered with the Congressional Women's Caucus Task Group on Young Women in its sponsorship of the Healthy Media Youth Act.

As for the initial advisory board, some of the participants have started their own Project Girl groups at their high schools or on college campuses. Other students have attended workshops to help middle-school kids host their own art receptions. In turn, those girls become docents, taking third-

and fourth-graders through the show. "It's a girl-led movement," says Kelly. "They really are hungry to make a difference in the lives of their peers."

In addition to the several Project Girl groups in Madison, Kelly and Jane know of other meetings in at least 15 states. They're publishing a new children's book, *ZILLY*, to reach a younger audience. And there may even be a Project Boy in the future. For now though, improving the way girls see themselves—and the relationships between them—remains Project Girl's priority. "We tell our girls to be the change they want to see in the world," says Kelly. "That's why this is really a story about them doing great things." ●



Life-sized body tracing inspired by the question, "How much of the 'real me' do I show the world?"