

Starla Davis first wrote Paul and the House Full of Donuts to share with the special needs children she teaches. Years later, her family and friends encouraged her to try and get the whimsical children's tale published.



Photo by Marissa Hugonnett



# A Real Sweet Family Story

Inspired by her dad's childhood tale, Katy book author Starla Davis pens *Paul and the House Full of Donuts*

Written by Natalie Cook Clark

Sometimes you don't have to look far for writing inspiration. Katy author Starla Davis is proof, having found the inspiration for her first book from a family story. Her debut children's book *Paul and the House Full of Donuts* recalls her father Paul Howard's childhood experience of making a lot of donuts. "I wrote it a while back to read to the special needs children that I teach," shares Davis. "I've always written, but never thought of it as a career until recently." She hopes her fun and whimsical tale teaches children the importance of obedience. Davis explains, "Sometimes, if we don't listen, then there are consequences."

## An Educator Thankful for Community

As a parent educator and co-teacher for special needs children at Stanley Elementary School, Davis loves writing for children and has always been inspired by them. Someday, she would like to write a story featuring a special needs child, since she feels they don't often get to see enough characters to relate to in books. Since the debut of her children's book in August 2010, Davis has appreciated the support of the Katy and Houston communities. Recently, she shared her story with a group of students at The Goddard School. As she read, donuts were passed out to the children to really make the experience memorable. Davis also took the experience further by dressing up as a chef and including props like a rolling pin.

"Her enthusiasm and dedication to the story made the literature more engaging and come alive and the story come alive for the children," says Angel Anderson, educational director for The Goddard School. The school loved Davis' story so much that they added it to their library. Davis enjoys visiting many other Katy area schools, sharing her story and her path to getting published with area students.

## The Path to Publication

After writing *Paul and the House Full of Donuts*, Davis says it sat in the house for many years. The support and encouragement from her family, especially from her two sisters, finally motivated her to send the story off to a publishing house. When she submitted her tale to Tate Publishing, she expected a rejection letter. Instead, she received a letter of acceptance.

Armed with only a few sketches from a friend, who had unfortunately passed away, Davis' worries about illustrations were put to rest when she learned that most publishing houses supply in-house illustrators for children's books. She was thrilled with the work that Tate's illustrators provided her. She saw the experience as a great lesson for any aspiring children's book author that you don't have to be able to draw to create a captivating story!



Starla enjoys reading her book to first-graders at Stanley Elementary



During a recent book signing, Starla surprised her dad Paul, who the story is based on, with a donut-topped cake on his birthday

## Persistence Pays Off

For Davis, her family, community, and friends played a key part in her success, encouraging her along the way. Her husband, son, and daughter provided a great support system for her creative endeavors. "I love bouncing ideas off my family," shares Davis. "Normally, it's the parent who gets excited about their child's idea, but I love to see my children's excitement about my ideas."

Davis' writing process varies by story. For *Paul and the House Full of Donuts*, she wrote down the story that had always been shared with her, editing it until it was a book. She already has some more book ideas in the works. For some of those, she writes ideas down as they come to her and tweaks them. Her process changes according to what works best for each concept. Davis encourages aspiring authors to finish their work and submit it. "I regret not doing this years ago," she shares. "Let a couple of people read it, and send it off!" Many writers have a fear of rejection, but you cannot be accepted and get published if you don't send in your work.

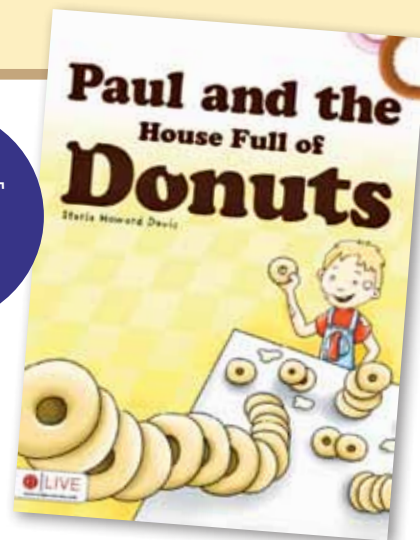
## A Recipe for Success

Every time she reads *Paul and the House Full of Donuts* to students, Davis loves to tell them how her father inspired the tale. "I love to share [with my father] the funny stories of what a child may say and let him know that children are learning from his inspirational, yet funny story," she says. Paul Howard, who is 90, loves to receive those phone calls. Davis also enjoys calling him for advice and encouragement, since even published authors need support from time to time. Davis loves reaching out to Katy children and readers of all ages through inspirational children's books. As she continues her career as an author, she hopes she can encourage parents to read to their children. **KM**

*NATALIE COOK CLARK enjoys freelance writing and sharing stories from her hometown of Katy.*

ALL  
ABOUT  
THE  
BOOK

By  
Starla  
Davis



One day, Paul sets out to make a batch of tasty donuts and asks his mother for the recipe. She warns him not to double the recipe, since it makes a lot. Paul really loves donuts, though, so he decides to quadruple the recipe.

Suddenly, there are donuts everywhere! Paul's mother tells him he must finish cooking all of the donuts, even though it is a lot of work. He asks his brothers and sisters for help, but they all say no. After a long day of cooking all the donuts, he has learned a valuable lesson:

Always listen to your parents!

- Adapted from *Paul and the House Full of Donuts*



HAIR Cut, Color, Special Occasion  
NAILS Mani/Pedi, Fills, Shellac  
MASSAGE & FACIALS  
WAXING & THREADING  
BRAZILIAN BLOWOUT

Package Discounts | Gift Certificates

MENTION AD FOR  
**50% OFF**  
ANY SERVICE

**281-347-3177**  
24219 KINGSLAND BLVD. KATY  
PARI FARZANEH | NADIA RAUOF | CYNTHIA LU

©2011 Katy Magazine