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Special surprise for students

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Self-published author Darla Woodley read her book *Red Socks Go With Absolutely Anything* to students at École St. Thomas last week. Taylor Weaver Meridian Source

Kindergarten to Grade 2 students in École St. Thomas's Club de JOIE had a special visit from author Darla Woodley last week.

Woodley, author of *Red Socks Go With Absolutely Anything*, was invited to the school to read her book to students and tell the story behind the meaning of the project.

This is something that hits close to home for the school as student Asher Leckie read this book to help keep him distracted and motivated while at the Stollery Children's Hospital in Edmonton for his third hip surgery in May.

"This is my first book and it's actually based on a family tradition of wearing red socks," said Woodley.

"We wear the red socks as a silent method of showing support and encouragement for others. I tell the kids I'm not a big yeller and I don't cheer that loud, but I wear my red socks, so my sons know when I pull a pant leg up that I've got their back, and it's a silent, secret method of just being there for people and they know you're watching and cheering them on."

"I'm here because I got an email from someone in the month of May telling Asher's story and how he had received a copy of the book and was wearing his red socks, and seeking photos of others wearing their red socks," she said. "Soon after that there was an anonymous benefactor who had offered to pay him for photos collected and donate funds to the Stollery based on the number of photos that were collected.

"This was amazing to be a part of and to hear about this individual who's going through his own strife and life and surgeries and who's being consoled by the idea of red socks."

Asher's story is one Woodley and her family knows all too well as at one time before the book they had three different family members not doing well who were in three different hospitals and they had people send in photos of themselves wearing red socks with inspirational quotes as a sign of support.

"So even when no one was there visiting with them they could still pick up this book with pictures and quotes and know people were cheering them on," said Woodley.

After seeing how powerful this support system was for her family members Woodley penned *Red Socks Go With Absolutely Anything*.

“This was never about money, it was about sharing the idea of these red socks and showing support and encouraging others,” said Woodley.

A highlight for Woodley during her visit was having an opportunity to catch up with Asher, since the first and only time the two have met was when he was in the hospital.

“To have something like this with Asher come out has been great, and to hear that people are being inspired by it and it’s helping others makes it all worth while, and it’s what I hoped it would be,” she said.



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