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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **THE REAL-LIFE STORY BEHIND THE STORY**

***Sammy's Broken Leg (Oh, No!) and the Amazing Cast That Fixed It*** began eight years ago when my granddaughter, then 2+, was rushed to the Emergency Room with a broken leg. Eleven hours later I was handed a sleepy, scared child encased in purple fiberglass. The words "beached whale" came to mind.

The next four weeks were hard as we watched pain, immobility and disruption of her life turn our granddaughter into a sad, scrawny version of her robust self. I vowed to someday write ***a book to help other young children and their families cope with the physical and emotional upset of life interrupted by a cast*** – from a fracture or other cast-causing condition such as hip dysplasia.

My book:

- gives children and their families realistic expectations about a prolonged recuperation and
- gives children a secret, whimsical source of power over their circumstance. The idea of a troupe of cheerleading kisses was inspired by a fancy I've always loved: "A kiss is the rosy dot over the 'i' of 'loving.'" —*Cyrano de Bergerac*

My granddaughter recovered, but to this day is a bit more cautious than her peers about climbing walls and zip lines. Now 11, she says she remembers the worst episode in her life. I believe her. After a recent misstep, her face paled and she murmured, "Oh, no, not again."

You can meet my granddaughter, Davi (DAH-vee), at [www.sammysbrokenleg.com](http://www.sammysbrokenleg.com). Click on "Davi's Corner" for video clips, readings from the book and more.

Despite a career as a writer, I had never written fiction, never a children's book. Yet this one flowed: one scene after another, in child-friendly prose. I sent the manuscript to friends and relatives. Most loved it, some disputed The Kisses. My hackles rose: do these folks also nay-say Santa, Peter Pan, the Tooth Fairy?

Over time, I did rewrite the manuscript to accommodate critiques and research:

- With the story's target preschool-age audience in mind, the manuscript was shortened and sentence structure and vocabulary simplified.
- Learning that boys suffer the majority of fractures in the preschool age group, my "Katie" became a tomboyish "Sammy."
- I recruited my granddaughter's second grade class as a "focus group" to help me decide which of three alternative endings to use.
- I sent the manuscript to pediatricians, psychologists, educators to make sure my story stood up to professional scrutiny. It did. You can find their testimonials on the book's back cover.

Next up: finding an illustrator. I wanted an artist with a fanciful style, bright palette...and someone who would love and empathize with Sammy. Networking rules! After an online search brought portfolios from around the

world, I found my illustrator, Lise C. Brown, eight miles from home. Unusual in author/illustrator arrangements, our relationship has been collaborative and collegial. I treasure it.

I wince recalling my quest for company(ies) to publish the hardcover, paperbound and e-book versions of **Sammy**. The evolving self-publishing industry is a muddle of vendors where apples-to-oranges comparisons make savvy shopping an exasperation, especially in the arena of illustrated children's books. A community college class, a straight-talking book (***The Fine Print of Self-Publishing*** by Mark Levine\*) and advice from my graphic designer, Gwyn Snyder (GKS Creative), and her colleague, Bethany Brown (The Cadence Group), brought order out of chaos.

\*Mark Levine, well-known author of six editions of ***The Fine Print of Self-Publishing*** (<http://amzn.to/2avb5Ye>) said this of my efforts:

*"I read your entire book. You are an example of how to proactively and successfully create a publishable children's book. The illustrations are definitely page-turners for a child. I also thought the story and illustrations balanced each other well. Your resourcefulness in finding an illustrator and getting the files made for the various distribution platforms is impressive."*

As I write this, I'm embarked on the next stage: marketing. With my background as a professional publicist, it should be easy. Create a press kit, stuff it in an envelope with some photos, stamp, mail...and call to follow up. But times and practices have changed. As with all phases of this book venture, I look forward to learning, then doing. For starters, look for Sammy's Facebook page and visit her website, [www.sammysbrokenleg.com](http://www.sammysbrokenleg.com).

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