

For Immediate Release

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BELLAIRE AUTHOR SHARES FIRST CHILDREN'S BOOK WRITTEN ABOUT ART CARS

HOUSTON, Texas – Students at _____ Elementary School will hear all about art cars, writing, publishing, illustrating, creativity and inspiration when a team of local artists present a children's book called *Arthur Zarr's Amazing Art Car*, written by Cathey Graham Nickell of Bellaire.

This week's lucky school is _____. Nickell's book is the first published book specifically written for children on the topic of art cars. It's relevant because The Orange Show hosts the country's largest and oldest Art Car Parade in Houston each year. Houston is also home to one of the first and only Art Car museums.

Nickell has been presenting her book to schools in Houston and beyond since it launched in 2016. She speaks to students about how she got the idea for her book (hint: her personal car sports 18 bumper stickers and counting), how they can come up with their own amazing story ideas, the writing and publishing process, and, of course ART CARS! She also reveals a few "insider secrets" about the making of her book. Nickell's illustrator, Bill Megenhardt, often accompanies her on these school visits. And there is almost *always* a real art car for the students to see up close.

When Nickell realized that no children's books existed about art cars, she set out to fill the void. The creative result is Nickell's first picture book, *Arthur Zarr's Amazing Art Car*, which released in 2016. It is available for purchase directly from Nickell or at various Houston retail outlets and online through Amazon. Local shops that carry the book include: Brazos Bookstore, Bering's Hardware (Westheimer location), and The Beer Can House.

Nickell, a former public relations professional and mother of four, does not drive an art car herself, but she loves snapping photographs whenever she spots one. The concept for Arthur Zarr came to her one morning during rush hour while driving her teenage son, Will, to school.

"I keep the back of my SUV covered with various bumper stickers," Nickell said. "I joked with my son, Will, that I need to be a polite driver and obey the laws of the road because my car is so incredibly recognizable. He laughed at me, insisting that no one ever notices me and certainly not my car. During the drive, Will's comment got me pondering what else—besides bumper stickers—might make a car memorable? That question triggered me to think about art cars, and by the time I finished my morning carpool, the concept for *Arthur Zarr's Amazing Art Car* was born."

Nickell's book is set in an imaginary town, where Arthur Zarr is a quiet man who lives alone. When he gets a creative idea to add everyday objects to his car's plain exterior, the people in his community start noticing Arthur for the first time. Neighbors and other bystanders join him by adding their own artistic flair to the car. Soon, Arthur becomes a contender in the town's Art Car Parade. His life becomes more colorful as the book progresses, and he makes friends along the way. Themes include recycling, outsider art, friendship building, community pride, and the power of imagination. There's an ABC motif that runs throughout the book—Arthur adds objects to the car alphabetically. At the end of the book, Nickell includes a non-fiction page that gives readers the "History of Art Cars."

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For her project, Nickell hired Houston artist Bill Megenhardt, an experienced graphic illustrator. Megenhardt has illustrated more than 35 children's books to date, such as: *Bernadette the Brave* (2016) by Allison Zapata; *An Armadillo Christmas* (2016) by Cressandra Thibodeaux; *Dream Write* (2014) by Sheri Kiss; and *Bye- Bye Moon* (2015) by Toby Haberkorn.

Arthur Zarr's Amazing Art Car is a hardcover book with dust jacket, published by Twenty-Eight Creative (ISBN: 978-0-9961150-0-1; 40 pages with color illustrations; \$19.99).

Although this is Nickell's first children's book, she also has written a nonfiction history book. In 2012, Nickell researched and wrote the 60-year history of the Institute for Spirituality and Health, a nonprofit organization in the Texas Medical Center. Her book, *Uniting Faith, Medicine and Healthcare*, serves as a marketing/fundraising piece for the Institute; it was revised for a second printing in 2015.

She is a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, the Texas Association of Authors, Houston Writers Guild, Writers' League of Texas, and the Association of Writers and Writing Programs. Nickell graduated from Baylor University in 1985; she received a Master of Arts degree from Louisiana State University-Shreveport in 2013. She is originally from Shreveport, La., but relocated to Houston in 1998.

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