

Article Last Updated: 08/31/2006 04:22:28 PM MDT

Novelist helping Highland Cove raise funds for literacy

Grandma's tale

By Kathryn Jones
Close-Up Correspondent

By the time West Valley City resident Jill Vanderwood realized she was a writer, she'd spent countless hours telling her fictional stories to her 8-year-old granddaughter, Alyssa.

Oh, the yarns she would spin - stories about a wonderful grandma who went to cooking school thinking she was going to learn how to cook. Instead, she cooked up some magic that took her granddaughter on a fantastic journey to a land where all wishes come true.

"I started telling [Alyssa] the story," Vanderwood recalls. "I changed the name to her name. I would tell

her the story and it kept growing and growing."

When Vanderwood decided to write the story, though, she ran into difficulty. She entered the story in a contest, but it was rejected.

"I almost threw it away," she says. "I put it away, probably for a year or two, and then I finally took it out."

A good friend, Becky Crum, helped muster the courage to begin again.

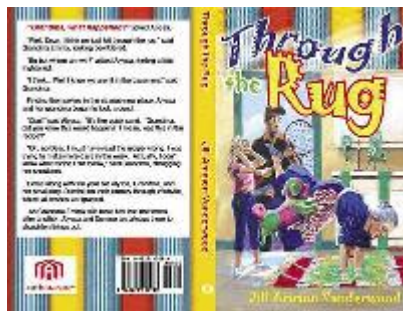
"She got me jump-started," Vanderwood says.

Five years later, after weathering and learning from several critiques of her work, Vanderwood had a book. "Through the Rug," published by Authorhouse, is not only about a grandmother who enjoys cooking up magic, but about 10-year-old Alyssa, a girl who gets entangled in her grandmother's bungling ways.

It begins with Grandma Emma's dog, Domino, being turned pink and green - a recipe left unchecked "expands into a small rug" that grandma,



West Valley City resident Jill Vanderwood has seen her fictional story published under the title "Through the Rug." (Kathryn Jones/Close-Up Correspondent)



Book Cover of "Through the Rug."
(Kathryn Jones/Close-Up Correspondent)

granddaughter, dog and dogcatcher fall through.

"They find themselves in more messes, from leaving Wishville with no way to return to going to sleep at the zoo," Vanderwood says.

Alyssa - her real granddaughter, not the

made-up character - is now 13 and is interested in other things, but Vanderwood's younger granddaughter, Savannah, enjoys the story. Vanderwood recalls reading the book to Savannah and her classmates at school and recalls their excitement at seeing the stuffed animal, Domino, which she brought along.

"They were as excited as I was," she says.

Currently, the novelist works with the Literacy Action Center, 3595 S. Main, and the Highland Cove Retirement Community to promote her first book and to raise funds for literacy.

"I want to help literacy and want people to know about my book," she says about the upcoming fundraiser.

The event at Highland Cove, 3750 S. Highland Drive in Sugar House, is scheduled for Sept. 9 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. It will feature activities related to Vanderwood's book. Adult readers from the Literacy Action Center will present a readers theater and Weber County Assessor Cheryl Madson will pose as a gypsy fortuneteller and read palms.

Other highlights include opportunities to meet pirates, fish at the fish pond, attend a make-believe wedding reception, get a manicure and receive an autographed copy of "Through the Rug." There also will be drawings for prizes - T-shirts and stuffed Domino dogs, among other items.

Donations are \$3 a person; admission for children 5 and under is free.