

Article Last Updated: 07/06/2006 04:49:20 PM MDT

Local author finds success

Local author finds success with her latest book, and she's not done

By Kathryn Jones
Close-Up Correspondent

Author Sara Fitzgerald is equal in courage and motivation to the fictitious characters she writes about.

Her most recent success, *Mine for Keeps*, a romance novel published by Canada-based Champagne Books, is the story of Virginia Wilde, a nanny who falls for a "sexy, swinging bachelor dad" despite her determination, after her first heartbreak, to never again "become emotionally attached."

In her own life, the Taylorsville writer juggles matrimony and pregnancy - she and her husband are expecting their first child - with book projects and her full-time studies at the University of Utah.

"I want to be a part-time therapist," says Fitzgerald, who is studying for a master's degree in social work.

Fitzgerald says writing while attending school has been doubly difficult. Still, she could never see herself giving up.

"I will graduate in August," she says. "It's been almost six years. I'm almost there."

While Fitzgerald's advanced degree is not yet in hand, her work is already on shelves. Her poetry was published recently in *Voice of Utah*, and a book she wrote, *Katrina the Caterpillar*, teaches children to speak and read English through words of hope, love and encouragement. She also takes part in the League of Utah Writers and The Romance Writers Association.

A popular speaker at writing seminars, Fitzgerald enjoys encouraging young writers. At a recent event, she told listeners: "Never give up. Keep writing. Start small." She advocates hands-on training as the best way to aid writers and encourage them to continue with their craft.

Fitzgerald's "character sheet," passed to participants at a recent seminar as they made their way around the room to sit with other writers, is a tool to help would-be authors flesh out the characters in their books and make them more believable.

Questions to discover include not only characters' names and ages, but their characteristic gestures, short- and long-term goals, as well as their "perception about life and God."

A writer since the fourth grade, Fitzgerald remembers the long-ago thrill of writing a winning poem.

"I will never forget how I felt when they put it on the wall," she says.

Fitzgerald's first published magazine article graced the pages of the LDS Church's *New Era* when she was 17. Many have been published since, including stories in *Story Teller*, *Vinegaretttes* and *Creative with Words*.

Mine for Keeps, her first book, has sold well since its February release, and Fitzgerald is thrilled with the response she has received.

"Most of my readers are women," she says. "But I have been surprised at the age range - from early teen to grandmother."

The characters in Fitzgerald's books are especially memorable. She says they "live on even after the book is closed." She says the characters have an agenda, a reason for doing what they do, thus making them believable.

In her second book, *Just What the Doctor Ordered*, she tells the tale of Elizabeth Lane, a student struggling to finish college and open her own medical clinic while working for the notoriously difficult Dr. Jess Miller. Still, as things turn out, "she could be just what the doctor ordered," The novel, also from Champagne Books, is due to arrive in October.

Fitzgerald's favorite manuscript to date, *Anything for Charity*, is scheduled for June 2007 release. *Yesterday's Wish*, a story that is still taking shape, will follow. Champagne Books will publish her work online, on CD and in print.



Sara Fitzgerald visited the West Valley library recently to promote her book. (Kathryn Jones/Close-Up correspondent)