

# i choose...

One local mom becomes a writer of an inspirational book

BY LISA BLACK

**W**hat does a bird; Mother, direct mail sales person and an author have in common? They're all a part of Suzin Helen Carr of Lutz.

Some ten years ago, Suzin was enjoying high numbers and a large paycheck as a top salesperson for a direct mail company. After some soul searching, she simply walked away from the company, the paycheck and the career she had known for ten years. For her, it was the right thing to do. She and Jim wanted to start a family and she had a new and even more important focus.

About 15 months later, their beloved Chandler was born and Suzin relished simply being a Mom. Like any Mom, she appreciated the people, places and events that touched Chandler-but simple appreciation wasn't enough. She embraced action and passion and set out to make a small difference in the lives of others as a way of giving back.

Her action and passion were recognized this past May. Suzin was the area Charter School recipient of the All Stars of Education 2007-2008 Award. This award, presented by SERVE and the Hillsborough County Public Schools, recognizes volunteers and groups that have given tirelessly of themselves for the good of Hillsborough County students. When asked about the award, she shrugs the accolades and simply acknowledges it was the right thing to do. Several years ago, she watched as a fundraising campaign at Learning Gate Community School, attended by son Chandler, was crawling with small donations and a lack of participation. She knew something had to change and she knew she had something to give.

So, she offered her creativity, sense of humor and dedication to the school that she, her husband and Chandler cherished so much. So, for the past several years during the days of the Annual Giving campaign, Learning Gate teachers, parents and students have eagerly anticipated whether she would be dressed in the cow outfit out front wearing the sign "Moo-la for our school-a", a vegetable or other character. As the campaign ends, she has become legendary for wearing a bird outfit and popping out of a nest that she creates on the top of her car!

Her attention getting antics not only bring laughs...but a \$70,000 "nest egg" the 2007-2008 year for Learning Gate's new "green" classroom. And her creativity and the commitment to making a difference in the lives of others just keeps going and growing. Now, there's the book. One night following a family cookout, Suzin disappeared into their study. The words and the rhymes were there and she just had to write. It was the right thing to do. And so, she wrote late into the night...and a book was born.

It is a simple book with a serious message. It is a book that belongs to and speaks to everyone. It has a message that's time has come - a reminder of simple joys and the empowerment of making good choices.

I Choose, written by Suzin and illustrated by her son Chandler is a fun, thought provoking book written and illustrated for children. Children see themselves in Chandler's artwork and can easily relate to the simple words and rhymes. Writing the book was one thing, but the printing and distribution were another. Suzin explains, "The book isn't really mine. It belongs to every friend, family member and organization that believed in the importance of the message and that helped us hurdle those early challenges."

The book, now in its second printing, has been a success locally, nationally and even internationally. The formal accolades have been many, but none as special as the many notes received from children across the demographic spectrum that have been touched and inspired by the simple message of the book. To Suzin, that's what really matters...creatively reaching one child at a time.

"When you receive that note from a child that says...I



*Suzin Helen Carr pictured with her son Chandler*

choose not to do drugs. I choose to love. I choose to be happy. I choose to be glad and willing. I choose to be nice...you know you're doing the right thing. There is no better thank you than that." And when asked about how she pursues her passion, Suzin peacefully replies, "Be still and quiet. The answer will always come. When you're still and quiet, you'll hear the direction you need to go. The help will come and so will the challenges-but if you're still, you'll know...you'll always know."

And her latest passion? She replies, "...to get this little book around the world and in as many hands as we can. We know it's important and is the right thing to do."

So, now you know. A bird, Mother, direct mail salesperson and author really do have a lot in common!

*I Choose is available at [www.illuminatedpublishing.com](http://www.illuminatedpublishing.com). Lisa Black is a mother of two and owner of [www.justanothermom.com](http://www.justanothermom.com)*

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