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AUTHOR ANGELICA HARRIS' NEW BOOK CLUB FOR KIDS SHARES THE MAGIC OF STORYTELLING AND EMPOWERS KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS TO BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES

NEW YORK (June 17, 2009) – Author Angelica Harris dreamed of being Miss Viviane when she grew up. As a child, Harris sat and listened for hours to Miss Viviane read tales of far-away lands and great adventures. Harris now emulates Miss Viviane, the storyteller in the children's section of her childhood library, in Woodside Queens, where she grew up. Now Harris does the same with children ages 3 and up at the Hall of Imagination at Frankie's Playce at the Shops at Atlas Park Queens. Today she is living her childhood dream.

"When I was 12 or 13, Miss Viviane took the pain away through her kind voice and her subtle nature in bringing the essence of the story to us," said Harris, who was abused by her mother as a child. "Later she would ask what the lesson of the story was. This is what I do with my stories now. I bring an essence of real life, but steeped in history, fiction and magic. But there is always a lesson within the fabric of the story. That lesson is clear – believe in yourself and the magic that you hold."

Harris knows first-hand of the struggles that kids with special needs go through as well. Her son, John, was diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome and ADHD at a young age, and reading to him became a way for both Harris and her son to find a calm place amidst the storms in their life.

"There are many kids with special needs that have trouble reading due to learning disorders," said Harris. "In my program, they can sit back, relax, hear a story, learn with the voice of the reader what the story means, and then realize on their own how that story can help them with their issues and struggles. I had one mother who told me that her daughter had trouble reading in school, but said for whatever reason, my reading to her relaxed her. She asked me if she could read the book with me. As she read the story, it brought her mother to tears. My program is not in a school or classroom atmosphere. It is for fun and the joy of storytelling. That is the magic of it all. If my books and program can do that for any family, then I have done my work well."

The weekly reading program is taking to the streets as well, as Harris begins to bring the program to groups and organizations dedicated to children with special needs. Schools have begun to use the innovative program for field trips, too. Each week has a theme, and the \$10 per child cost includes storytelling, refreshments and a craft project. The program mirrors that of an adult book group. Harris engages the children in a discussion about a book's theme and how it relates to their world around them. Children are grouped according to age (and the book selection is based on that): preschool, ages 6-10 and 11-14.

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“If the lessons in my stories or in the books of other authors that I read can show a child that life will be okay, then reading a good book can become a best friend to curl up with on those dark days when they are in a doctor’s office,” said Harris. “The written word keeps me steady on my course in life and shows me the very fabric that I am made of. I hope I can show children and adults alike what reading and storytelling can do for them.”

For more information, kids’ book club times, schedule, or about Harris’ reading program and the Hall of Imagination contact Harris at Frankie’s Playce, 718-326-2023, or Angelica Harris, 718-381-9552 or angelica@angelicaharris.com. To learn more about “Excalibur Reclaims Her King,” visit www.angelicaharris.com.

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