

Story Makers Ink

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The Literary Resource for Teachers,
Librarians, and Parents

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GRACIE DIX
INVITES YOUNG READERS
TO A SPECIAL SCHOOL

TORREY MALDONADO

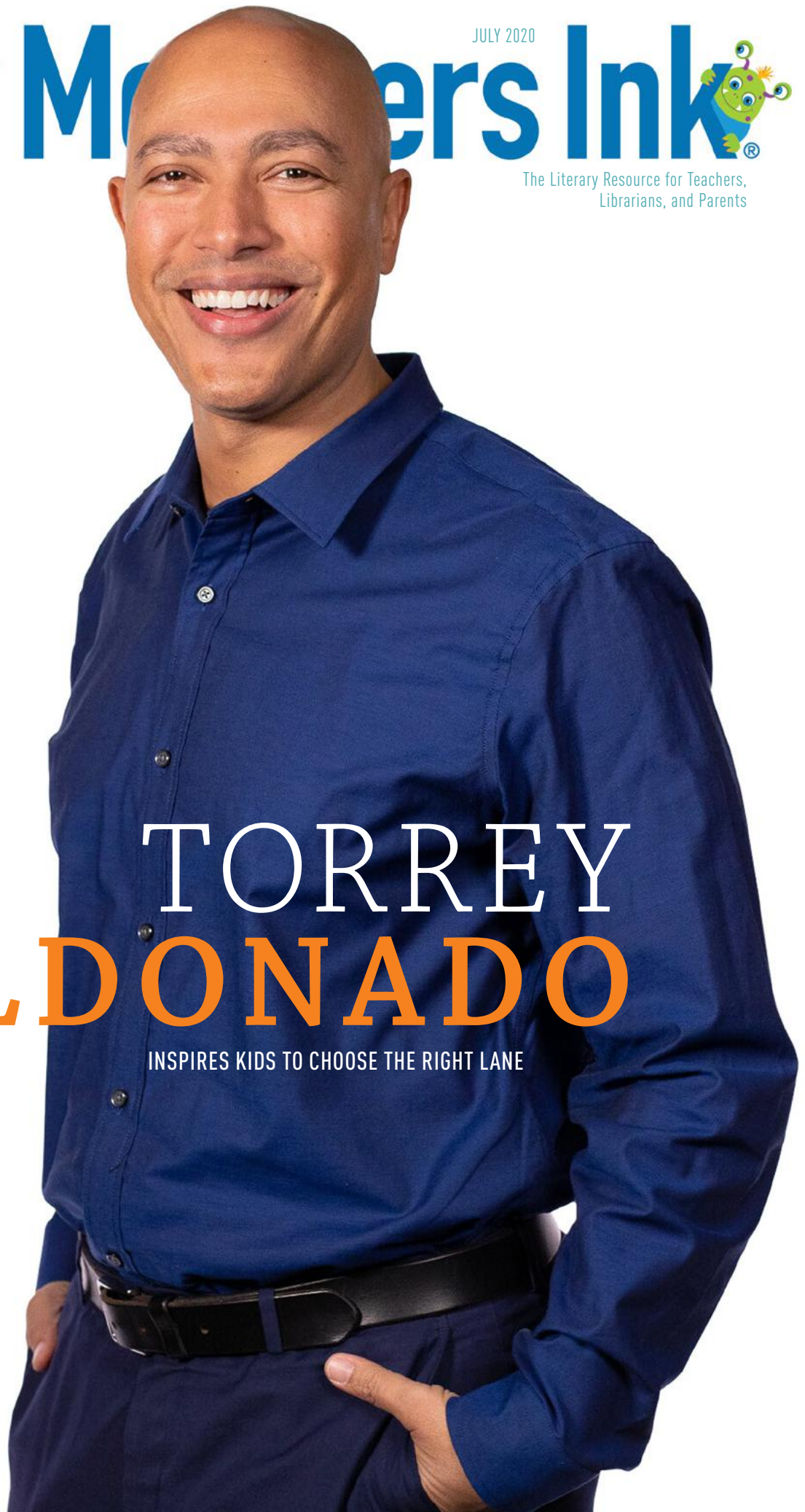
INSPIRES KIDS TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT LANE

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TEACHING TOOLBOX
HERE COMES THE SUN

Q&A WITH
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Gracie Dix

Invites Young Readers to a Special School

by Melissa Fales

The Covid-19 crisis has been especially difficult for teenagers, including 18-year-old author Gracie Dix. With school out of session, Dix has missed out on milestone activities and hasn't been able to spend as much time with her friends as she would like to. However, Dix says she keeps her spirits up by focusing on the positive things she's experiencing during these unusual times. For example, she recently released two books, *Welcome to Superhero School*, Book One in the *Vork Chronicles* series, and its prequel, *Journey to Superhero School*.

Both of the books are about teens with superhuman powers who must learn how to control their special gifts and, more importantly, how to work together. “*Welcome to Superhero School* actually came out on April 28, which is National Superhero Day,” says Dix. “That was pretty cool.”

Dix says she grew up reading books and eventually tried her hand at writing. Through writing, Dix found clarity. “Somehow it frees my mind and helps me get at what I want to say,” she says. A few years ago, Dix was inspired to enter a writing competition. “I just wanted to get something of mine out there,” she says. The contest was open to submissions of poetry or short stories, and Dix eagerly attempted to enter a short story she had crafted and was particularly proud of. Unfortunately, she learned that her work didn’t meet the criteria. “The minimum word count was 50,000 words,” she says. “I was nowhere

near that.” Undaunted, Dix set out to write something on a larger scale than she had in the past. She began writing what would become her series, the *Vork Chronicles*. “I love anything fantasy,” says Dix. “I knew that’s the genre that I would be working with for sure.”

For two years, Dix worked on *Welcome to Superhero School*. The story follows the adventures of 12 teenagers who each have a special superpower. “They all go to a superhero school together,” says Dix. “Eventually, they discover the existence of Vork, an evil organization threatening to destroy the superhero world as they know it. They decide that they must band together and take Vork down.” Along the way, the teens use their powers, which range from mind reading to morphing to invisibility, to battle the bad guys in a variety of unique situations featuring fantastical creatures.

If the characters seem especially authentic in *Welcome to Superhero School*, it’s because Dix has assigned the characters genuine personality traits of her friends. An avid dog lover, Dix even found a way to include a special canine friend in the story. “One of my dogs, Snowball, is a character, too.” Dix has pledged to donate \$1.00 from the sale of each *Welcome to Superhero School* book to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) International.

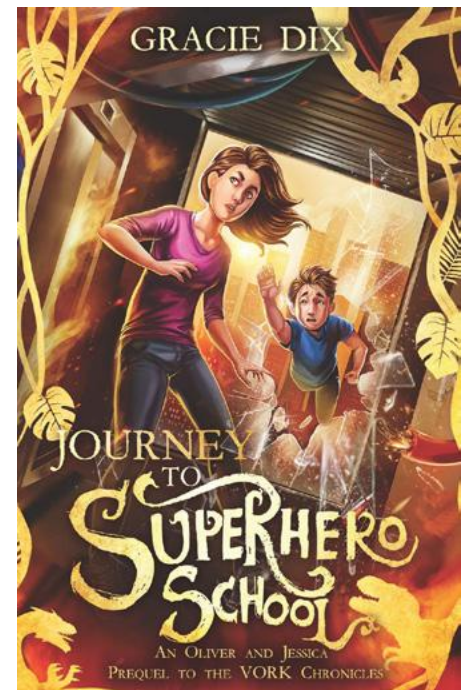
In *Journey to Superhero School*, readers learn the backstory of the two main characters from *Welcome to Superhero School*, twins Oliver and Jessica Fletcher. They learn at an early age that they have superpowers and that these special abilities which set them apart must be kept secret until the time is right. Growing up brings its own challenges and having superpowers definitely makes things more



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complicated, but by trusting in their twin bond and with a little help from their parents, Oliver and Jessica make it through and end up just where they need to be. “It’s a prequel to the *Vork Chronicles*,” says Dix. “You can read these two books in any order. If you want background on Oliver and Jessica, you should definitely read the prequel, but it’s not mandatory.”

Dix is already hard at work on another book in the series. She’s reluctant to give too much away, but promises that fans of *Welcome to Superhero School* and *Journey to Superhero School* will enjoy it. “It has the same main characters in it,” Dix says. “In this one, they get invited to participate in a game show. The thing is, there’s a bit of an evil twist to the show that the kids don’t know about.” Dix said she got the idea because she wanted to include an atmosphere dome in her story. “Then I thought, why not make the atmosphere dome part of a game show?”

Looking ahead, Dix says she plans to continue writing more books within the *Vork Chronicles* series, but wants to switch gears and try writing something brand new. “I’ve already got the intro to this story that could be another new series,” she says. “It’s a young adult book about a kid who makes it to the afterlife. I have a lot of ideas.”

While Dix laments missing out on the end of her junior year of high school and the fun festivities that were cancelled due to Covid-19, the experience has reinforced just how important her friendships are. She’s found solace in her favorite creative outlets, with some occasional time spent vegging out in front of the TV for good measure. “Writing and painting has helped me get through this,” she says. “I’m lucky to have things I’m so passionate about to keep me busy.”

To find out more about Gracie Dix and her books, including donations to SPCA International, visit graciedix.com. ●