**Pioneering Irish Author Inspires Series of Story Walks**

**Dolores Keaveney is the first Irish author to have a series of “story walks” designed with pages from her books. This involves laminated pages being attached to wooden stakes and installed along an outdoor path. As children stroll along the trail, they're directed to the next page of the story. Mountmellick Library put together a story walk for *Dee the Bee* in October 2020 and Kerry Library organised another in Tralee Park last summer. The latest trail has just been built along Mullingar Greenway, and was launched by Cllr Aoife Davitt, the mayor of Mullingar and Kinnegad.**   
  
“Story walks are a wonderful way to get children out in fresh air and encourage a love of books and reading. I’m thrilled to see Dee spreading the word about the magnificent bee, and entertaining little people as well as teaching them about the environment,” says Dolores. The old railway trail which forms part of Mullingar Greenway has a special connection to Dolores, whose father was a railway worker for more than 50 years. “Hopefully this series of walks is just the beginning,” says Dolores, who would love to see Dee becoming an attraction on international trails as well as Irish ones.

A Mullingar native, Dolores has an impressive fifteen children’s books to her name since independently publishing her debut, *If I were a Bee*, in 2009. Although *Dee the Bee* was published by Starfish Bay, the rest of her books were released by Dolores, who blazed a trail in Irish self-publishing. Dolores’ stories have a timeless, classic quality and her work is often compared to that of Beatrix Potter, who was herself a self-publishing pioneer.

With opportunities to promote her books in person limited by Covid-19 restrictions, Dolores embraced social media. Dolores created a series videos showcasing her work and collaborated with libraries all over Ireland on virtual events. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Library has just launched a new initiative called ISL Storytime and added Irish sign language to five different videos of Dolores reading her stories aloud. These can be viewed on the DLR County Council YouTube channel.

*Huwie the Apple Tree*, Dolores’ most recent work, released in June 2021. About a little boy who sows a tiny seed that transforms into an enormous tree, this is based on real events involving Dolores’ own grandson. An uplifting story which demonstrates how hope can blossom even in challenging times, its sequel, *Huwie Meets the Red Fox*, is due for release in spring 2022.   
  
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Dolores Keaveney has been painting for 40 years. Taking inspiration from nature, her art is colourful and uplifting. Dolores published her first children’s book, *If I Were a Bee*, in 2009. Since then, Dolores has launched a further fourteen titles. Her books can be found in schools, libraries and bookshops all over Ireland and around the world. Several titles by Dolores are featured on CBI’s Recommended Reading List. Dolores lives in Mullingar.

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