

# Arts & Style



Four books that help start 2018 on a positive note. See story on page 28.

## Grandmother's kids books focus on family

By Carol Sorgen

As is the case with most grandparents, Daneace Terry Jeffery's grandchildren have her wrapped around every one of their adorable little fingers.

But unlike most grandparents, Jeffery has made her grandchildren the stars of a series of children's books. Her "Ella Books" are loosely based on Jeffery's two oldest granddaughters.

The third of Jeffery's projected five-book series, *Another Me*, has just been published. It is the story of 4-year-old Ella, who is anxiously awaiting the birth of her baby sister.

The excitement of having a little sister or brother can be overwhelming for any child. But for Ella, there is the additional uncertainty of who her sister will look like. Ella, you see, is biracial.

Jeffery, 58, lives in Pigtown in Baltimore and teaches at Howard High School in Howard County. An avid reader since she was a child, growing up in Detroit, Jeffery couldn't wait to share her love of books when her first granddaughter was born.

But when she went to the bookstore, she couldn't quite find what she wanted.

"There were books about being black, books about being white, and even books about being biracial," said Jeffery. "But those identities were the focus of the book. I wanted a regular book whose main character just happened to be biracial."

### Inclusive characters

Since Jeffery couldn't find what she wanted, she set out to write a book for her granddaughter herself. Her first book, *Ella's Bubbles*, was about a 3-year-old who desperately wants to learn how to blow her own bubbles. It's not until her granddad comes up with a clever way to teach her how to blow bubbles that she conquers her goal.

Jeffery's second book, *Grandma's Two*, continues the adventures Ella as she visits her two grandmothers — one of whom is black and lives in a city, and one of whom is white and lives in rural West Virginia. Though her two grandmothers live different lives, Ella loves them both, and learns family lessons from each of them.

Jeffery, the mother of two adult sons, has five biracial children, three of whom are also Muslim. "I decided to write my

own books because I wanted my grandchildren to have positive images of characters that resemble them," she said.

"All of my books are based on my actual grandchildren and family," Jeffery continued. "I intentionally chose to showcase a mixed-race family because the world is changing, and all children need to see that change in the media as well. It's so important for biracial kids to see themselves in a positive light."

The next book in the series will focus on Sophia, Ella's little sister, and her active imagination. The fifth and final book will introduce Ella and Sophia to their Muslim cousins (Jeffery's three other grandchildren).

### A book for military families

Jeffery will also be working on a book of a more serious nature, this one for adults. Her nephew, Xavier Martin, who lived in Halethorpe, was one of seven American sailors to die last June when the *USS Fitzgerald* collided with a container ship off the coast of Japan.

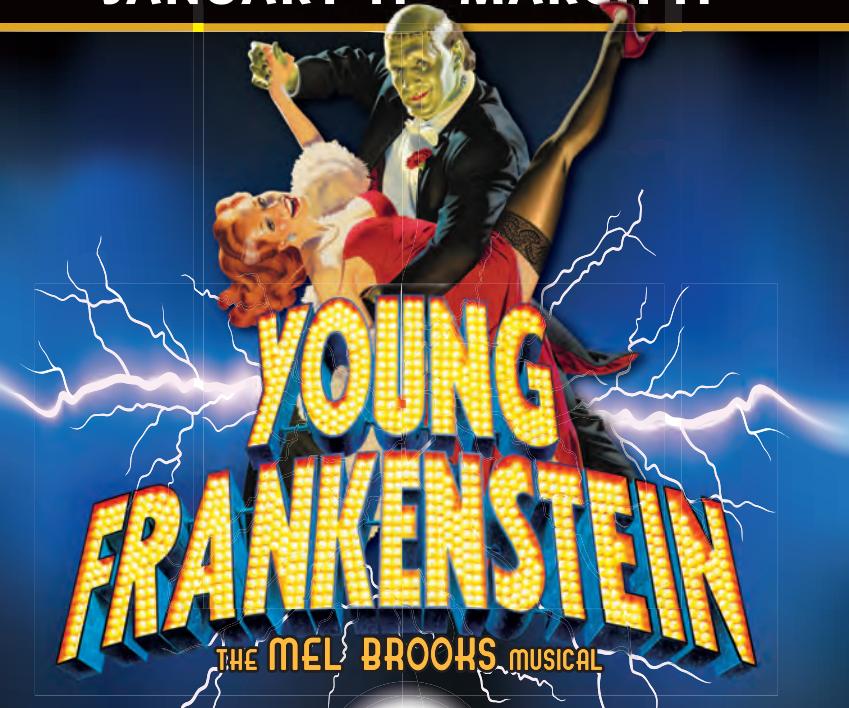


Daneace Terry Jeffery's series of picture books about a young biracial girl named Ella are loosely based on her own granddaughters. The Howard High School teacher is also at work on a book titled, *After Your Hero Dies*, inspired by the death of her nephew in a naval accident.

*After Your Hero Dies* will relate the story of what actually happens when a family

See **PICTURE BOOKS**, page 28

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# Start 2018 on a positive note with these

The beginning of a new year is a time for assessment and action. Look ahead with hope. Read and reflect on the choices before you. Draw inspiration on how to make improvements, break old habits, and forge new positive pathways. Start each day of 2018 with a smile and a purpose.

**Brain Rules for Aging Well: 10 Principles for Staying Vital, Happy, and Sharp** by John Medina, 288 pages, Pear Press hardcover, 2017.

Enjoying good health well into old age has been the focus of much recent scientific research. **Brain Rules for Aging Well** is a concise summary of what experts have determined is the best approach for people to achieve longevity, sound mental health, and physical vigor.

Dr. John Medina, a molecular biologist, lucidly explains the jargon of neuroscience, physiology and other esoteric fields of study. He helps us understand the process of aging — physically, mentally and psychologically. He imparts this information in a conversational manner.

After explaining the basis of current knowledge, he proceeds to delineate how



## THE BIBIOPHILE

By Dinah Rokach

to best make use of the latest research with specific, practical applications we can incorporate in our own daily activities. The book includes many stories that bring the topics to life. Each chapter concludes with a summary of salient points.

While he apparently has a business interest in selling video games to seniors, Medina soft pedals that endorsement. He offers a wide range of suggestions on how to mitigate the undesirable aspects of aging. He encourages us to defer retirement, keep a busy

social schedule, go online to communicate with others, learn new skills, exercise and read.

"Voracious reading," he writes, "... turns out to be good for aging brains and, surprisingly, even better for longevity." Amen to that! Learn how to age well by utilizing nostalgia as a tool to enhance life. Read about the importance of cultivating a frame of mind that embraces optimism, mindfulness and gratitude.

**Revivement: Having A Life After Making a Living** by Gloria Dunn-Violin, 270 pages, Having A Life Now Publishing softcover, 2017.

Whether you've been laid off and are looking for a new job or want to stay productive as you age, you will find **Revivement** to be an excellent resource.

Research shows that people who broaden their horizons, learn new skills and stay active live longer. Ms. Dunn-Violin directs her advice to those over 50.

She coins the term revivement as an alternative to the word retirement. The book inspires us to broaden, rather than narrow, our life's purpose, add to our skill sets, and not lose the ones we have through disuse.

We are encouraged to look back to find and reignite our former passions that may have been latent during middle age. Read stories of those who have followed this concept, then complete the worksheets to formulate your personal goals.

The author provides practical advice: Use technology to make life simpler. Don't let new ideas and methods pass you by due to lack of curiosity or resistance to change. Nurture excitement in what you do. Venture down a challenging new course, and stop treading the comfortable, safe, old worn-out path.

Finding purpose in our activities is essential for vitality. Making meaningful use of our time and energy brings fulfillment and satisfaction as we age. That's a goal to which we should all aspire in the New Year.

**Everything You Need to Know About Social Media (Without Having to Call a Kid)** by Greta Van Susteren, 305 pages, Simon & Schuster paperback, 2017.

For those who have yet to join the social media world, Greta Van Susteren's detailed step-by-step book is an indispensable guide. Chapters cover Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Snapchat.

Also included is information on loading your own videos online, what she calls personal broadcasting. Her book painstakingly takes you through the process of using each platform — including their advantages and downsides, how to sign up, the exact privacy settings you may want to con-

sider, and how to load videos and photos.

The book effectively employs screenshot illustrations. Explanations are easy to understand. In Van Susteren, technophobes have found a warm and engaging coach to help broaden their horizons.

**Cartoons from The New Yorker 2018 Day-to-Day Calendar**, 640 pages, Andrews McMeel Publishing boxed edition, 2017.

Humor is an important tool in overcoming life's vicissitudes. Enjoying a good joke is a great way to start each day. What could be more useful in setting the proper tone in 2018 than a desk calendar with a daily dose of humor?

The droll wit of *The New Yorker* magazine's famous cartoons will surely help put you in an upbeat mood as you face the day. Your coping skills will be enhanced when you put this calendar on your desk.

*The New Yorker* magazine has included cartoons since the periodical's inception in 1925. They are not just for New Yorkers. They're for anyone who enjoys a touch of sophistication along with a humorous take on contemporary life.

Most cartoons include a sketch with a caption that gives a pithy, wry or humorous comment on the illustration. The cartoons are in black-and-white, and drawn in a multitude of styles by a wide variety of talented and witty cartoonists who also supply the captions.

The calendar pages are bound together at the top in a black plastic holder and can be ripped off each day. There are only six per week; Saturdays and Sundays share one page. Official holidays in the English-speaking world are noted at the bottom left, including the country where they are observed. At the bottom right is the day and date.

While the cartoons and captions take up most of the page, the back is blank for note-taking. It's not an appointment calendar, just a daily appointment with a funny cartoon. Smile, chuckle, relax, and the rest of the day may be more easily endured.

weekends to judge cheerleading competitions.

Jeffery is looking forward to retirement, when she can spoil her grandchildren non-stop. But that's still seven years away. So for the time being, Grandma's just going to keep writing.

*Jeffery's books are available at Barnes and Noble, on Amazon, and through her website, www.ellabooks.weebly.com.*

*She will sign her books at Greetings and Readings in the Hunt Valley Towne Center from 1 to 2:30 p.m. on Feb. 3.*

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## Picture books

From page 26

member in the military is killed while serving his or her country.

"I had no idea what it takes to support a family in times of tragedy," said Jeffery. "The organizations, the individuals, the military....So many of them we'll never meet, or be able to thank them in person."

In addition to her teaching and her writing, Jeffery is also a cheerleading coach and judge, traveling the country on

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