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Page at Oktoberfest

Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest this week announced that Steven Page, former frontman of the Barenaked Ladies, will headline this year's Willkommen Platz. His performance will take place on Oct. 11 in downtown Kitchener, where tens of thousands of festivalgoers will gather to raise a stein and sing along to iconic hits.

www.oktoberfest.ca

Playing the blues

Kicking off with a fundraising concert by Burton Cummings tonight (Thursday), the Kitchener Blues Festival runs through Sunday. Friday's headliner at the city hall stage is Cracker, with Saturday performances on that stage by David Wilcox, My Son The Hurricane and Bedouin Soundclash. In Victoria Park, you can take in The Sadies, Daniel Lanois and Anthony Gomes.

www.kitchenerbluesfestival.com

One big summer project for young writer

Callie Martin, 8, is well on the way to creating 50 books before heading back to school in September

Julian Gavaghan
Observer Staff







Callie Martin (top) shows the box she wants to fill with her wonderful books, which have impressed her father, Geoff Martin, and sister, Rylee (bottom right). Julian Gavaghan

FOR MANY SCHOOL-CHILDREN, SUMMER-TIME IS an opportunity to kick back, relax and take a break from putting pen to paper.

But not for eight-year-old Callie Martin – she's writing even more.

The aspiring young author from Elmira set herself the target of creating 50 books before going back to school next month.

And, so far, the John Mahood student has already passed the halfway point, with an impressive collection of hand-written miniature novels, some of which are no larger than a playing card.

All of the tales also include imaginative illustrations.

"I just love to write, so I like the holiday because I can write my books," said Callie, who admitted that she is also looking forward to entering Grade 4 in the fall.

The bright youngster wasn't sure which tiny tome was her favourite, but her father, Geoff Martin, liked The Spicy Meatball adventures the most and her six-year-old sister, Rylee, enjoyed A Fairy Tale Garden best.

In that latter escapade – a three-in-one book – she reveals the secret lives of impish creatures no larger than a human hand, who help tend plants and look after nature.

Already rivalling authors like Harry Potter creator J.K. Rowling, Callie has created several different series of books, including the Stairs of Magic trilogy.

"It's about a boy and his grandpa," she explained, noting that the mystical adventures are written in the first-person style, from the grandson's perspective.

There are also four Spicy Meatballs, as well her Life Collection of Kid Life, Mom Life and Dad Life.

Other wonderful titles include The Manure Farm and Sofie the Butterfly, You're Finally Gonna Play with Me, I Love My Job, and Dogs are Deer and Cats are Squirrels.

Some of the tales are straight from Callie's vivid imagination.

Ideas just "pop" into her brain, she admitted.

Others are inspired by novels she reads, such as her favourite Dragon Girls series by Maddy Mara.

While a total of 50 books was her original goal, it's possible, at the rate she's going, the young writer could have drafted closer to 100 by the time school resumes on September 3.

"She's trying to fill this box," explained her father, holding a roughly 10-inch cubed, cardboard container.

"I got her a desk, and that's where she writes, and now, instead of watching TV, she wants to write books, which I think is really cool."

Callie admitted she learned a lot from her teacher last year, Laura McBay.

"I can write longer sentences and spell words better," the girl explained.

Her father has noticed the difference too.

"She used to ask Alexa, but not anymore," he said, noting that Amazon's voice of artificial intelligence has been somewhat quieter in their household of late.

While somewhat bashful, Callie has no trouble putting her ideas into writing.

"She wrote four books this past weekend," said her father.

The 39-year-old plumber added: "I don't know what I did right.

"But all she wants to do is read, write and draw.

"It's pretty cool. She keeps writing books like crazy."

When Callie eventually fills her self-titled box of "whole made" stories, the young novelist has had another brainwave about what to do with her impressive creations.

"She wants to put them in a community mailbox for all the kids in the township to come and pick up a book and read them," said her father's girlfriend, Katie Dawson.

"Her dream is to share, so we also thought we could create an e-book for Amazon with a couple of her little short stories, because there's a series of them.

"They're pretty interesting. Some of them are about emotions, and they're pretty advanced, I think, for an eight-year-old."

