



**fascinating people of woodforest, resident denise ditto** Written by Resident Julia Byrd

## From Real Estate Law Office To Author - Just Add Magic Fairy Dust

“What about a story about tooth fairies? Maybe even a boy tooth fairy?”

They were interesting questions, really, and ones that Woodforest resident Denise Ditto hadn't given any previous thought to as she searched for a topic for her first children's book.

In fact, if you had told Denise years ago that she'd be a children's book author, she would never have believed you. After working with a real estate attorney for 27 years, Denise entered college at age 44 and rediscovered her love for writing. It was after graduation that she decided to write a children's book, but she just didn't know where to start. So she began asking friends for ideas.

**A Great Idea, Sprinkled With Fairy Dust**

The tooth fairy suggestion stuck with Denise, so she began drafting the text for a picture book about what gives fairies the power to fly and what happens to a tooth after a child loses it. (Hint: Well-brushed teeth generate fairy dust with magical powers.)

It seemed easy enough. But little did Denise know, getting a picture book published wasn't as easy as it sounded. After sending the manuscript in for professional critiques, she learned her 1,000-word story was too long for a picture book — but too short for an early reader.

Rather than cut the story short, Denise decided to add to it. She developed a storyboard, created a new story arc and added a bully. She was again ready to take on the reviewers. But while she never found a publisher, the reviewers told her to consider self-publishing. So she did. (The book is available for purchase now on Amazon and barnesandnoble.com.)

She hired a publishing consultant (“the best move ever,” Denise said), found an illustrator and began moving forward. The only thing she still didn't have was a boy fairy.

What she did have was a touching story about a self-conscious tooth fairy (Batina's wings are just a little too big for the rest of her) and magic fairy dust. Through determination and teamwork, Batina shows that differences shouldn't stand in our way; instead, they should be celebrated.

“Batina's Best First Day” is the first in Denise's The Tooth Collector Fairies series (ToothCollectorFairies.com), and her picture-book-turned-early-reader was released to rave reviews. It won Chanticleer Book Reviews' Grand Prize Award in the children's books category and received three Readers' Favorite 5-star reviews.

The second book, “Home From Decay Valley” will be released later this year and centers on Batina, who has been banished to Decay

Valley after collecting a poorly brushed tooth, and her friends who are trying to save her. (“And readers will finally meet a boy fairy,” Denise exclaimed.)



**From Paper to the Stage**

Publishing the book was a great accomplishment, but Denise was just getting started.

She had taken the book to the Katy Visual and Performing Arts Center

in fall 2015 and talked with the executive artistic director about turning it into a musical. They loved the idea, so Denise assisted in writing the script and wrote six original songs. (“Writing the songs was far more challenging than writing the book,” Denise admitted.)

Seeing Batina come to life onstage in October 2016 was thrilling, and Denise is now looking at cataloging the musical and making it available to theaters across the United States.

C. KIDZ Theatre School, the junior division of the Players Theatre Company, will be the next to perform the musical version of “Batina's Best First Day.” Showtimes at the Owen Theatre (225 Metcalf St. in Conroe) will be Thursday, May 10 at 6:30 p.m. and Saturday, May 12 at 2 p.m. Tickets are free, but the theatre gratefully accepts donations for the performances. Reserve seats by calling or texting (936) 524-4242; you can also arrive 30 minutes before showtime for general seating.

Terry Woods, the managing director of C. KIDZ Theatre School, said, “Our group is very excited to be partnering with Denise for our spring show event.” Denise feels the same way. “It's been an extraordinary adventure, and I can't wait to see where Batina takes us next.”



**A+ Stone**  
**Flag Stone**  
**Moss Rock**  
**Mulch**  
**Gravel**  
**Grass**

**WE DELIVER!**  
 4688 FM 1488  
 Conroe, TX 77384  
 (936) 321-5406  
 www.AandAstone.com

BRING IN THIS AD FOR A 10% DISCOUNT



**CONROE AWNING AND SCREEN**

**Extend your living space with Retractable Awnings**

**We offer Affordable & Custom Options for all types of Patios**  
 Call us for a Free Estimate..... **936-447-5300** or **800-378-1828** | **conroawning.com**