

The Great Big Yawn is Aurora sisters' love letter to dad, book for kids



There were few things Margaret and Eleanor Clowater loved more when they were kids than a trip to the zoo – except, perhaps, a new, vivid bedtime story from their dad, Roger.

A natural storyteller, it didn't take Roger too long to unite his daughter's two loves – but he couldn't have foreseen that his off-the-cuff bedtime story of a relatively sleepy visit to a zoo would result in his daughters' first work as published authors.

Ella and Margaret, both students at the University of Guelph, have taken inspiration from one of their favourites of Roger's yarns, and the result is *The Great Big Yawn*, published by FriesenPress and illustrated by Rachel Shead.

The Great Big Yawn tells the story of a father-daughter visit to a zoo where one tiny yawn from an equally tiny fawn sparks a chain reaction throughout the entire mini-animal kingdom calling the zoo home.

“Both of our parents are very hard-working individuals,” says Ella. “After a long, hard day at work, you come back to your kids crying, wanting to see you and all of these things, and they want to spend time with us – at the same time, our dad was so tired from working all day he came up with this story called *The Yawn* to get us to sleep.

“He would exaggerate the yawn every time to make us yawn ourselves and eventually fall asleep – and when you read this book you're guaranteed a yawn.”

The sisters decided to sketch the story out into more of a physical representation as a Father's Day gift last year. So impressed was Roger he suggested putting their heads together on a “real” book – and now on sale at most booksellers, readers far and wide can get drawn into the Yawn as well.

“Once you start the process, you realize how exciting it is, how much fun it is to see your vision come to life,” says Margaret. “The fact that we actually have the book and you can see it is so crazy and it has definitely sparked interest in creating more books. We had such a great experience with this and it was so much fun writing a book that connected our family.”

And it's connected well beyond their nuclear unit.

A two-year-old cousin, they say, was among the first beta readers of *The Great Big Yawn* and the sisters knew they were on to something when they could follow along, relate to the story, and leave them wanting more.

Aurora has left the authors wanting more as well. Despite being located in Guelph, Margaret and Ella retain strong community ties and say they look forward to the chance to sharing their book with more local readers.

‘We’ve talked about getting involved with the community in Aurora and would love to create awareness and engagement,’ says Margaret. ‘We’d like to go to the Aurora Farmers’ Market and the Aurora Public Library to do a reading.’

Adds Ella: ‘A parent and a child, we also think it is super-important to sit down and read with your kid. Both of our parents did that with us and we remember it forever. We loved just having that one-on-one time with our parents, reading a book. I just think it helps with our relationship, as opposed to being sat in front of a TV. Don’t get me wrong, we would sit and watch TV with our parents and we loved it, but this is different!’

By Brock Weir