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SHANNON O'NEIL RELEASES DEBUT NOVEL, *ANCIENT CITY CHRISTMAS*
O'Neil self-published her first full-length fiction work through Lulu.com.

St. Augustine, Fla. -- A dream that began in a third grade classroom in 1993 finally became reality for Shannon O'Neil today, Dec. 4th, with the release of her first novel, *Ancient City Christmas*. The young author's debut effort is a lively tale about an unconventional family united for a modern holiday her hometown, the Nation's Oldest City.

"It's an indescribable feeling," said O'Neil. "I've had the ideas, the characters and the different settings rolling around in my mind for years. Now I have the actual product, the fruits of my labor, that I can actually hold in my hands and treasure for a lifetime."

O'Neil, who won *The St. Augustine Record's* annual Christmas story contest in 2000, decided to become an author at the tender age of nine. She credits her teacher at the time, Mrs. Baldauff, with igniting her passion when she introduced the youngster to creative writing at Webster Elementary School.

In 2003, after graduating from Pedro Menendez High School, O'Neil put one childhood dream on hold for another. Her writing goals fell to the back burner while the lifelong Seminole fan headed to Tallahassee with a scholarship to Florida State. Five years and two degrees later, O'Neil returned home this August in the hopes of finding a full-time public relations job on the First Coast. But as the economy began its downward slide, the twenty-four year-old found herself with an indefinite amount of free time on her hands.

"At first I went through a few months of some serious frustration, just like everyone else is dealing with right now," said O'Neil. "But after a while, I found a silver lining in this whole mess and decided there was no better time than the present for me to get this story out of my head and put it on paper."

Although her story revolves around a zany cast of characters banded together as a unique sort of family, O'Neil promises that none of them are based on members of her own family.

"I think the basic feeling of the two families is the same--it's about love, not blood--but this fictional family is far crazier than my real family."

O'Neil plans to bring the colorful characters in her self-published debut novel (including a hippie stepmother with her own original holiday, an African orphan who has secretly adopted the Western culture, and a proud Southern grandfather with a penchant for cigars and whiskey) back for another novel. Or two.

“I don’t think they’re done telling their story yet,” O’Neil said. “I hope to keep going and possibly tell a few more tales through the eyes of Bailey Hamilton and her family. I really enjoyed getting to know them through this process. Since I finished writing, I’ve found that I really miss them!”

But even if this is both the beginning and the end of her writing career, the young author says she’s more than satisfied.

“It’s given me a great sense of accomplishment,” said O’Neil.

Her debut effort also offers a special note of thanks to a certain group of people that O’Neil credits with helping her achieve her lofty childhood goals.

“If it wasn’t for all the amazing teachers I’ve had from kindergarten through graduate school, I would never have had the skills, the abilities or even the desires to make this happen,” said O’Neil. “I could never thank them enough, but I thought listing each and every one of them in the back of my book was a small step in that direction. Maybe one day I will be able to do more.”

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Check out the Full Circle Studio blog at www.fcstudio.net to see the marketing plans and tools that St. Augustine’s newest all-inclusive marketing firm is using to promote Shannon O’Neil and her debut novel.