ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

Gingerbread from the Heart
Janice K. Mineer
Misty Z. Danyo, illustrator
978-1-59152-063-4
(October 2009)

When Grandma is down with a bad knee around the holidays, Kristin, Brandon, and even little Maggie are disappointed about missing out on their favorite holiday traditions. Then, Kristin has the great idea to bake gingerbread houses to help cheer Grandma up. Each child makes his or her creative ideas come to life in warm gingerbread, sweet gumdrops, and royal icing, but Kristin can't help but hope that Grandma likes her practically perfect house the best. Grandma explains how much she loves each house, and Kristin begins to see how the differences between the three children make them uniquely special, and learns how love and family are the most valuable gifts.

Author Janice K. Mineer is a gingerbread specialist, and has been involved in the Ronald McDonald Gingerbread Contest for five years. Portions of the proceeds of the book are donated to the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Montana. Inspired by her family and a special little girl named Kyla, Mineer has communicated her belief in the power of love and service in [title=book]Gingerbread from the Heart.[/tilte]

This sweet message pairs with a light and fun story, as the book describes in detail how Kristin and Brandon shop for candy, bake their spicy gingerbread, and finally build their very own gingerbread houses. The details clearly stem from Mineer's experience, and the book really captures the magic and imagination inspired by gingerbread houses, especially when Kristin imagines herself living in her house, waking up to "yummy hot chocolate served in caramel mugs."

Although the illustrations, particularly the illustrations of characters, are a bit amateurish, Misty Dano's warm tones create a cozy mood that complements the story well. She adds an extra element in her border work, which features candy and cooking tools. The houses depicted in the book are renditions of Mineer's own creations, which again add a personal touch.

The reading level is just slightly higher than the content, and since the story might be a bit long for very young children, this is an ideal read-aloud book for 5-8 year-olds. While the story and pictures are sometimes too precious, *Gingerbread from the Heart* is a wholesome

holiday story, perfect for families to read together.

Alicia Sondhi