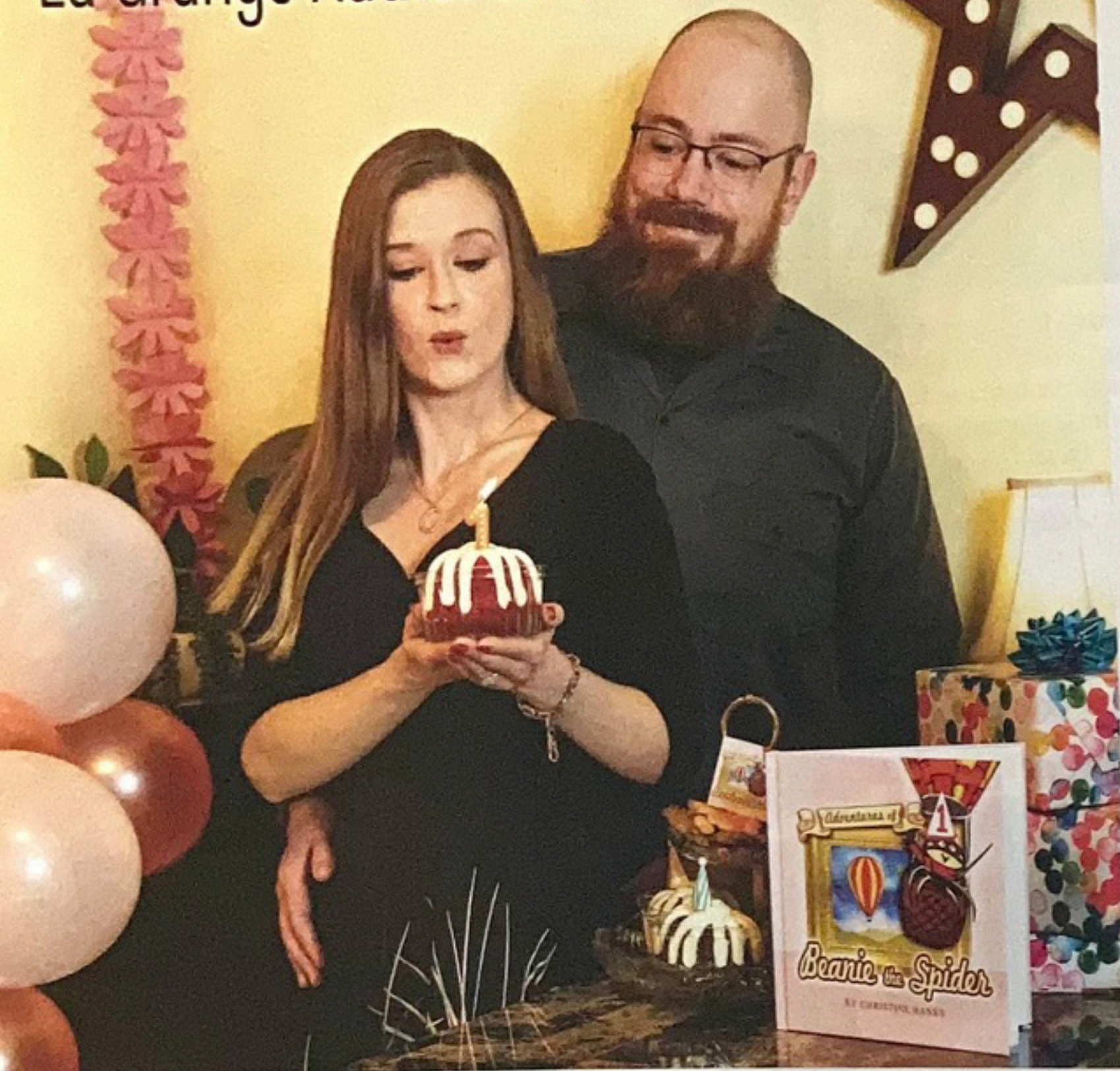


Meet Christine Banks La Grange Author and Artist



STORY BY TINA MORNA FREITAS PHOTOS COURTESY OF MORNA FREITAS PHOTOGRAPHY
We would like to thank Hope Dental for sponsoring our feature story!

Local author/illustrator and artist Christine Banks is celebrating the one-year anniversary of the publication of her book *Adventures of Beanie the Spider*. A lifelong artist, Christine has created artwork in many forms, including acrylic painting, photography, stone cutting and sculpture. She found the extra time and inspiration to illustrate and publish a children's book in 2020 when everything shut down and she started face-timing story books with some of her 17 nieces and nephews. She read over 100 Golden Books to the children. The inspiration for Beanie's story came from a spider Christine found living in one of her paintings.

The La Grange resident and her husband Bill have both lived here most of their lives. Christine moved from the southside suburbs to La Grange in the 90's with her mother and attended St. John of the Cross and then

LT High School. Bill's family have been La Grange residents since the 1920's, starting with his great-grandparents. Both his parents and grandparents went to LT, and his mother marched in some of the earliest Pet Parades as a child.

While Christine and Bill attended LTHS at the same time, they were two years apart in age and never had a class together. They met after high school when they were both working at Papa John's in Countryside. After dating for years, Bill planned a surprise proposal when they went to Chicago for a fun day to celebrate Christine's birthday. As they walked along the lakefront near the Planetarium, Bill went down on one knee, and her friend Larry, a professional photographer, was waiting nearby to capture the moment for them. In 2015, in a La Grange-themed wedding, her best friend Laurie married Christine and Bill at the La Grange Theatre. They mini-honeymooned in

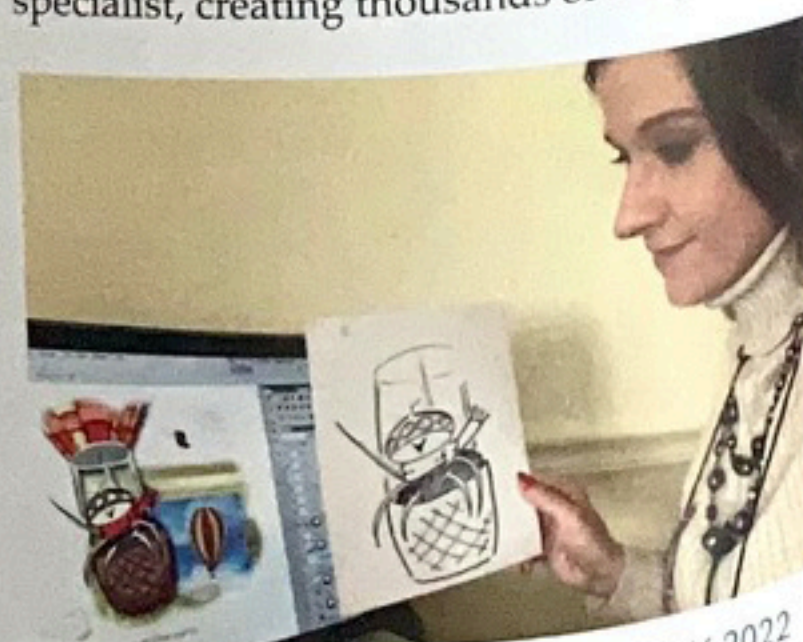
Photo by High Impact Imaging



South Haven, Michigan after the wedding, and it's still one of their favorite places to visit.

Christine and Bill's first apartment was near the downtown area, and they loved the convenience of walking to Palmer Place for dinner or going to the movies. For a few years they moved out of La Grange to be closer to their jobs, but after driving through town for a visit in 2011, they spent the rest of the day browsing available properties and moved back a few months later. Currently, they live in the Historical District and enjoy going on walks around all the unique and historical houses. "On summer evenings the air is full of the sounds of laughter around the crackle of firepits, as everyone seems to enjoy the warmer days," said Christine. "It's great to live in a place that has a year-round vacation town feeling."

For ten years Christine designed wedding albums and managed operations as head of the Design Department at Fred Fox Studios. She was the Gallery Director at the La Grange Art League from 2016-18, and then the Executive Director of the Naperville Art League until 2020. She is also a talented graphic designer and photo imaging specialist, creating thousands of unique



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designs and advertisements for a variety of industries since the late 90's. She is a member of a variety of Art Leagues in the area and has exhibited works in galleries throughout Chicagoland and the Midwest, winning various awards.

Christine regularly donates her artwork to charity auctions for a variety of causes, as well art demos and teaching classes for local non-profits. She is a member of the La Grange Business Association and has volunteered as a Design Review Commissioner for the Village of La Grange since 2017. Since publishing *Adventures of Beanie the Spider*, Christine has used Beanie's story to encourage children to engage in the arts. Local businesses such as Country House in Clarendon Hills, Steak+Vine, and Milkstop Cafe in La Grange have held Beanie the Spider coloring contests. She pays visits to local preschools to read her book and answer questions about being an author and artist. Beanie has also spent time in Michigan, with a coloring contest at the Phoenix Street Cafe in September, as well as a meet-the-author event sponsored by the South Haven Center for the Arts and South Haven Memorial Library in August 2021. The book itself contains educational activities at the end, plus Christine has created a Beanie the Spider website that offers free printables and videos of art-related activities for young children.

Fun Facts about Beanie the Spider

- Beanie the Spider is named after Christine's cat, Beanie
- The artwork on the gallery walls in the book are real paintings Christine painted on canvas, photographed and then inserted into the book using computer software.



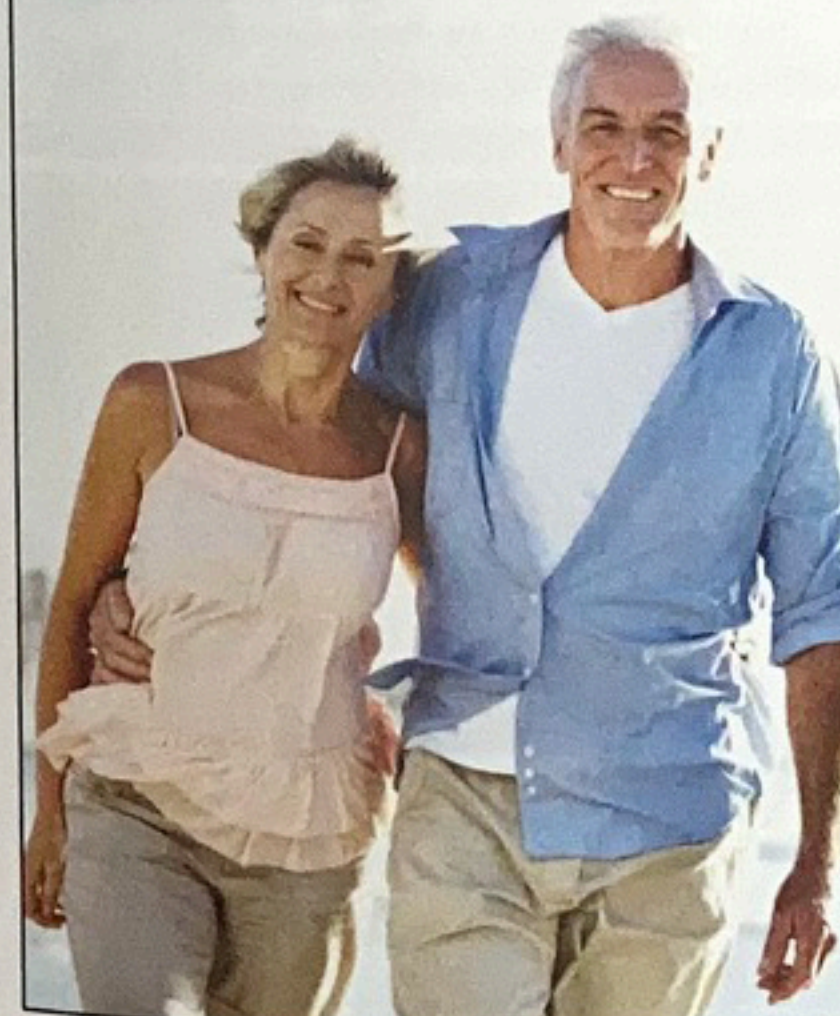
Christine reads to niece Sophia and nephews Achilles and Austin.

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