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SUN PHOTO BY LINDA MURPHY

Children at Barnes & Noble bookstore in Westlake listen as author Julie Goulis reads her new book, "Something Shiny, Something Round."

## Author illustrates perseverance

By MARY DAVIES  
Staff Writer

Julie Goulis earns a living as a copy writer for a Cleveland advertising agency, so one would think she could easily write a children's book.

Not so.

Given the vast number and wide variety of children's books available, one could assume a professional writer wouldn't have much trouble getting published.

Wrong again.

Being snubbed by a dozen publishers

didn't stop Goulis and her co-worker John Ferguson, an artist, from getting their books into children's hands.

Together they, with Brad Hauber, who Goulis married in September, formed their own book company and began producing a series which so far has sold thousands of copies and is available in bookstores nationwide. A third book is in the works.

In "The Things A String Can Be" and the newly released "Something Shiny, Something Round," Goulis tries to spark simple imaginative creativity in today's electronics-indulged children.

By incorporating ordinary objects into

play, Goulis also provides adults a trip down memory lane.

"The whole concept is what people really love," she said. "It automatically brings people back to their childhood."

Goulis, of Cleveland, and Ferguson, of North Royalton, met on their first day of work for an advertising company in March 2000. They have worked closely on job-related projects ever since and became good friends.

In early 2003, Ferguson suggested to Goulis they write a children's book. He said he was unimpressed with the quality of

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books he'd been reading to his preschool-aged son.

Goulis thought little of it until visiting with Hauber's young nephew in Boston. She picked up a few of the boys' books and then spent the drive home thinking Ferguson's idea wasn't so far-fetched.

Goulis, a journalism graduate from Bowling Green State University, and Ferguson, who majored in fine arts at Youngstown State University, spent countless lunch breaks and weekends digging up tips on writing children's books and learning laws and protocol of getting published.

More than a year of research and frequent revision of the story and illustration proved tougher than anticipated.

"It was hard," Goulis said of her initial experience as an author. "There were times when I got discouraged and John got discouraged, but Brad never got discouraged. He kept us going."

The three were very happy with "The Things A String Can Be," Goulis said. They were hopeful for success, but they were not surprised by rejection letters from every publisher they contacted.



SUN PHOTO BY LINDA MURPHY

Julie Goulis signs a copy of her new book, "Something Shiny, Something Round" for fans Amelia Barber, 3, and her sister Olivia, 6.

"What you'll see in the publishing industry is that if you're not a famous person or published before, they're not going to take a gamble on you," Ferguson said.

To release their first book, Goulis, Hauber and Ferguson started Bubblegum Books in 2004.

Though it receives many manuscripts from aspiring authors, the company is not yet producing books other than

those from Goulis and Ferguson.

Goulis and Ferguson are enjoying their local fame. Both said they are flattered by accolades they receive from fans at their book signings and on the company's Web site, [www.bubblegumbooks.com](http://www.bubblegumbooks.com).

"Pick it up — it's something different," Goulis said, encouraging readers to try her books. "It's fun. Kids love to hear it again and again."