

**Contact:** Angie Dzalamanow, (877) 958-2600  
[AngieDzalamanow@SylvanDellPublishing.com](mailto:AngieDzalamanow@SylvanDellPublishing.com)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Classic Folktale Gets New Wings

*Children's Author, Educator Looks to the Skies for Lessons on Listening*

**MT. PLEASANT, S.C. (March 3, 2008)** – The air is fresh, the daffodils are blooming and the birds are nesting. But should Sparrow build her nest in some leaves, or in a hollow log? Would Owl's design be better with a feather lining? Is a nest of mud in the reeds safer than one built with weeds in the trees?

Faced with such crucial questions, the birds decide to get a crash course in nest building from the expert, Maggie Magpie. But can Maggie teach these bird-brains how to build the best nest, or will they prove too flighty to learn? That is the question in Doris Mueller's newest children's book, "The Best Nest."

"Retelling the old folktale on which my story was based has been a wanna-do of mine for a long time," explains Mueller, who remembers a version of the tale from her childhood. "If I neglected to listen to my mother's instructions for baking cookies or running an errand, she would tell me the story of a magpie who tried to teach other birds to build beautiful, strong nests like hers. All but one failed to attend to her instructions and went off to build inadequate nests."

The manuscript was a long time in the making for Mueller who said she started writing it about 10 years ago. "When it didn't immediately click, I laid it aside," she explained. "But when I learned of Sylvan Dell Publishing and its combination of story and learning activities, I tried again." Mueller began researching the nest-building styles of different American birds, and this time "the rest seemed to follow naturally."

As she hoped, Sylvan Dell Publishing, a South Carolina-based children's book publisher, picked up the manuscript in early 2007 and added it to its 2008 lineup.

"As a teacher myself, I suppose I identify with Magpie," Mueller muses. Currently a professor at the St. Louis Community College, she has taught at every level, from kindergarten through graduate school, and is no stranger to the challenges of short attention spans and poor listening skills. "Certainly I have known many students (and others) who were unwilling to listen until the end of an instructional sequence" she reveals, "I believe it's critical for children to learn early to listen – and **how** to listen."

"We knew immediately this would be a great book," said Donna German, editor and co-owner of Sylvan Dell Publishing. "Not only does it have the educational component, it's also a charming story full of comical characters." Illustrator Sherry Neidigh's detailed drawings give students a close-up look at the differences among bird nests, and the "For Creative Minds" section at the back of the book includes fun and educational activities.

"'The Best Nest' has the feel of a classic folktale with a message that is really vital for today's children" enthuses German, "the story just works on so many levels."

Ordering information and free supplemental materials – such as audio readings, activity ideas, learning links, quizzes and more – are available at [www.SylvanDellPublishing.com](http://www.SylvanDellPublishing.com).

**Visuals:**

For cover art or Mueller's headshot, e-mail [AngieDzalamanow@SylvanDellPublishing.com](mailto:AngieDzalamanow@SylvanDellPublishing.com).

---