

# PEOPLE

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## A Passion for Writing

Washington Native Has Transformed Herself From Stay-at-Home Mom to Romance Novelist

By Karen Cernich,  
 Missourian Features Editor

Several years ago when Washington native Stacey (Schroepfer) Schlegl was planning her career, she tried to be realistic. Her forte was writing, but she knew that might not pay the bills, or at least not well, so she turned to her second best subject — science.

At Maryville University in St. Louis County, she majored in biology with the intention of working in physical therapy.

"I loved helping people. I had a background working in nursing homes, so I thought it would be good, but I didn't like the physical therapy program," said Schlegl. "I didn't like gross anatomy, and I realized I just couldn't do it."

As it turned out, Schlegl's passion for writing won. Today she is a working author with six books under her belt. Three have been published, and two others are being considered for publication. One, a nonfiction/memoir, will be available in December.

Schlegl's transformation from soccer mom to author has been a fast one. She has written five of her books within the past year and a half. All fall under the romance genre, but they aren't all stereotypical "romance novels," said Schlegl.

"Wishing" is her most recent book to come out. It was released earlier this month.

Schlegl, who now lives in Wildwood, describes it as an "inspirational, very sweet" story about a pregnant woman who loses her husband to a heart attack and tries to move on. "Everywhere she looks she sees remnants of her old life — Tony's dirty coffee cup on the counter, his briefcase still sitting in the doorway, his dirty laundry exactly where he left it before he died," a synopsis reads.

"Elizabeth can't bring herself to let go of her husband. Her daughters on the other hand, are yearning for a father figure. One shiny penny tossed into a fountain wishing for a daddy sends the wheels of fate turning.

Destiny answers by having Dr. David Michael come to the rescue as her Lamaze coach."

Schlegl's book, "Preconceived Notions," which came out in March, is more "straight-up" romance, she said. "It has more spice."

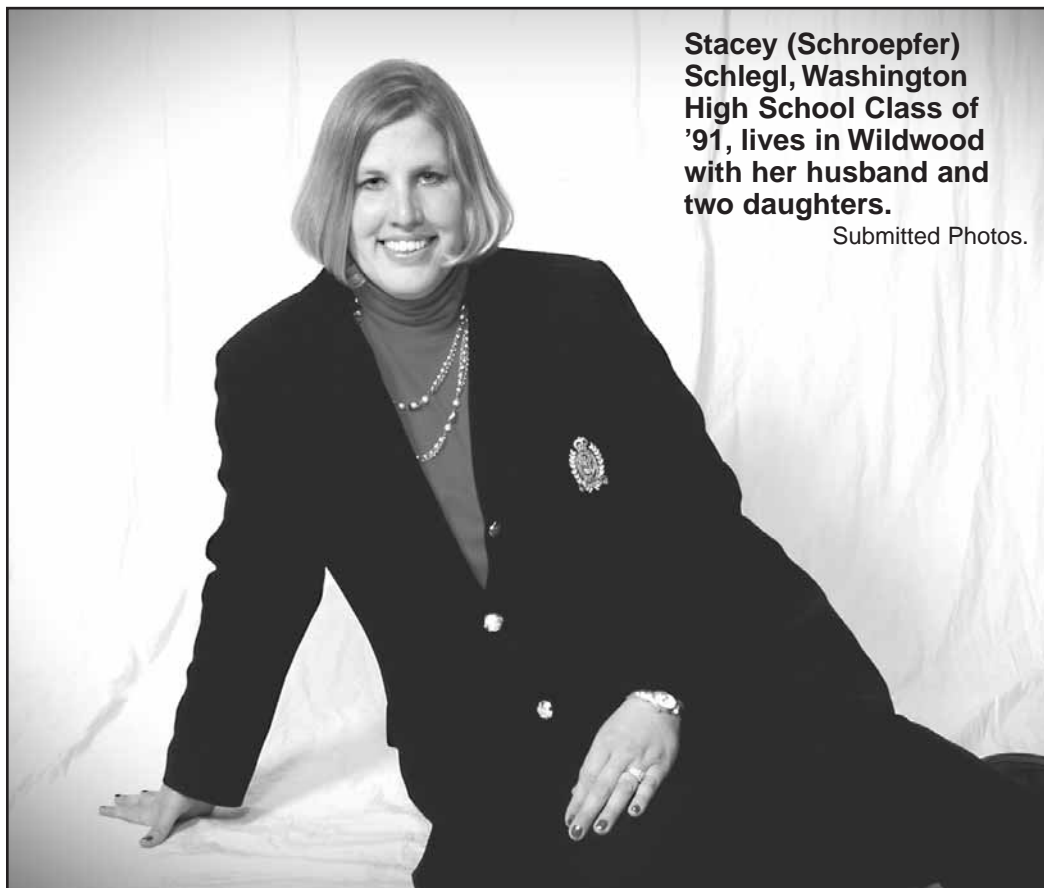
Here's a synopsis:

"Tiffany, a single mother in a small town is trying to make ends meet. Everyone has an opinion of her; however, there is more to her than what they see . . . or think they see. The town gossip is that she got pregnant from some city boy she met at a nightclub and is scavenging off her poor widowed mother. Women talk about her. Men gawk at her. She isn't perfect, but some of their 'preconceived notions' are wrong.

"A bike accident sends the wheels of fate spinning and brings her face to face with a 6-foot-5-inch man with eyes the color of the town's lake. Marcus helps Tiffany and her daughter home and cooks them a meal fitting for a fancy restaurant in the city. They keep meeting and the fire between them is only appropriate since she is the famous 'Firegirl.'"

Schlegl's third published romance, "The Defense," is actually an "e-book," meaning readers download it off of the Internet.

Her two books that are now being considered by publishing houses are "Scent of Lilacs," which is a mystery that compares what people are like on the inside to the face they present to the world; and "Greener Pastures," which is set in the country and tells the story of a married woman who begins to feel there are "greener pastures" with someone else.



Stacey (Schroepfer) Schlegl, Washington High School Class of '91, lives in Wildwood with her husband and two daughters.

Submitted Photos.

The book that is coming out in December, "Dreaming of Raindrops," is actually the first one Schlegl wrote. She began working on it more than eight years ago just after her daughter was born.

"I've always been a night owl, and after my first daughter was born, I would be up late holding her, and after she fell asleep I would keep holding her and type with my other hand," Schlegl said.

"My husband, Paul, was building a Web site design company and he was always up late, so that's when I would do my

books.

The hardest part of getting a book published, Schlegl feels, is taking time out to market it and then get it published.

"I would just rather keep on writing," she said.

Schlegl began writing romance novels about a year and a half ago as a more upbeat, fun genre compared with the more weighty subject in "Dreaming," which is about a young girl who is abused by her boyfriend and how she overcomes that abuse.

Schlegl has found writing romance to be much more fast-paced — she finishes a novel about every two months.

"When I'm done, I market it and it takes about two weeks before it's published," she said.

Writing comes naturally for Schlegl, who wrote poetry as a grade school student, was editor of the Washington High School paper and also wrote for the yearbook.

Once an idea pops in her head, it doesn't take long for her to flesh out the entire story.

"The hardest part is finding time to get it down on paper. I can have the whole story in my head, and I can't get it down fast enough," said Schlegl, who spends much of her day caring for her two daughters — ages 8 and 4. She volunteers at their school as a librarian and also serves as the room mom.

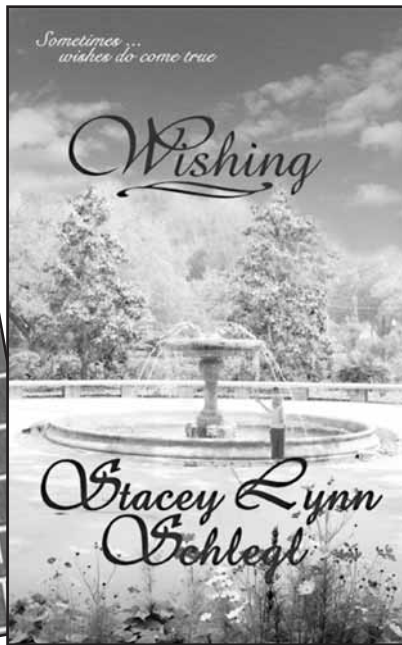
Schlegl does most of her writing in the middle of the night, from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m., when her daughters are asleep. She occasionally finds time to write over the lunch hour, but she prefers to have a longer stretch to keep going with an idea.

Schlegl said she typically gets about four or five hours of sleep a night. In the summer months, when her kids can sleep later because school is out, she gets more — maybe seven.

The story ideas come easily, too, for Schlegl. Often, ideas are inspired from everyday life — hers or others.

"I put myself in other people's shoes and ask, 'What if . . . What if I were overweight and 23 . . . What if I were a single mom raising a child alone in a small town?'"

The book Schlegl is working on now, "The Last Sunrise," is about a woman



Schlegl has already had three of her romance novels, above, published, and two more are being considered. Her nonfiction book, left, will come out next year.

writing."

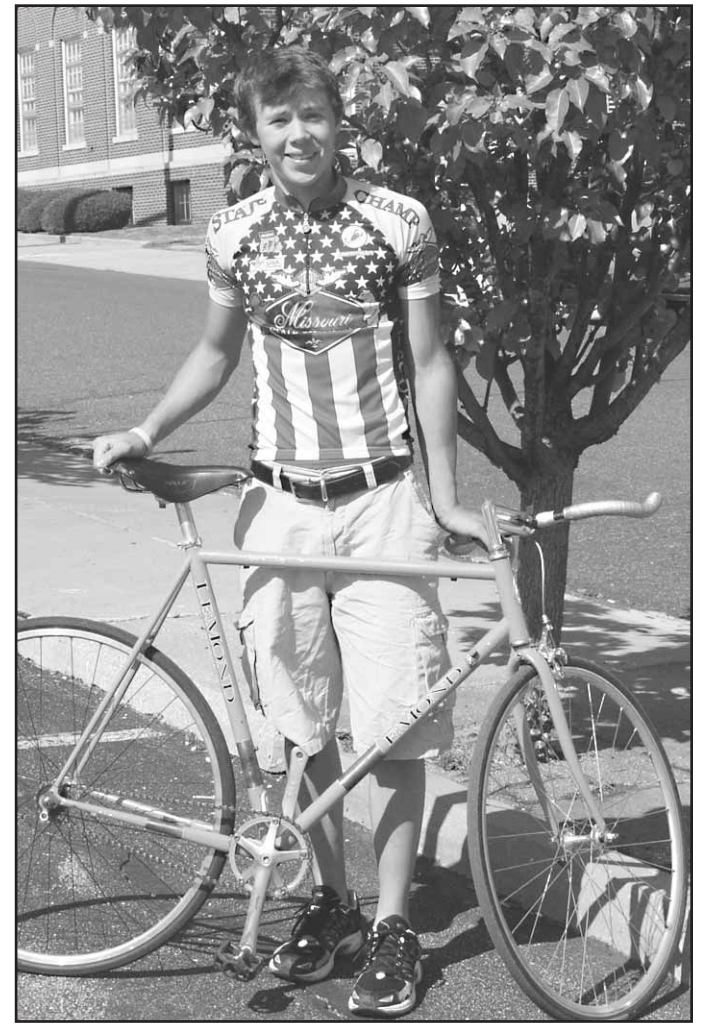
After Schlegl finished "Dreaming," she wasn't in a big hurry to do anything with it.

"It sat in a drawer for a long time," she said. "I had done it kind of like a hobby, as something to do."

Her husband, however, could see its value. So about two years ago he brought home a copy of the book "Writer's Market," about how to get your work published. Schlegl took the hint and got to work marketing her manuscript.

"I actually got it signed right away," she said, "but there have been difficulties in getting it into print."

Initially "Dreaming" was 2,000 pages — much too long for a single book, so Schlegl broke it into a series of three



Rory King, a senior at St. Francis Borgia Regional High School, wears the State Champ jersey he won in the State Mountain Bike Championship earlier this month.

Missourian Photo.

## On a Whim, Teen Competes, Wins State Mountain Bike Championship

You never know what you can accomplish until you try.

That might be a cliché, but there is truth to it 17-year-old Rory King learned earlier this month.

The St. Francis Borgia Regional High School student and amateur cyclist waved goodbye to his family Saturday, June 2, and headed for the Missouri State Mountain Bike Championship race that his racing team, Big Shark Racing out of University City, was sponsoring at Matson Hill in Matson, Mo.

King intended only to volunteer at the race, but instead he came home the winner. King won both the mid-race prize and the final winner. No one was more surprised than he.

"This was my first mountain bike race," he said. "I usually do road races. That day (June 2) it was raining, and the mud made it hard, but I felt pretty comfortable."

King said his parents, Peggy and Chris King, Washington, were proud when they learned of his win, but they were disappointed they hadn't been there. Not that they could have seen much of the experience, he said.

"Mountain bike racing is not a great spectator sport," he remarked. "So much of it happens on the trail, where the crowd can't see it."

Mountain bike racing is a wholly different sport from road racing, King noted.

"There's a lot to process on the trail," he said. "It can be rugged with rocks and roots, and you have to look for the best line, process the slope, especially when it's muddy."

Prior to the June 2 race, King hadn't been on a mountain bike for years. When he was younger, maybe 12 or 13, he used to ride a mountain bike in front of his house, but he had long given up the hobby.

Earlier this year, King took up road racing and joined the Big Shark Racing Team through Big Shark Bicycle Company in University City, where he works. Already he has participated in half a dozen races.

King doesn't even own a mountain bike, but was encouraged to enter the June 2 race when a fellow Big Shark teammate who wasn't competing lent him his bike.

"He got me into it," King said. "He had a bike that I would fit on, and he lent me all the gear, so I did it." King competed in the beginner category, but he performed like an experienced rider.

The race started at the one-mile climb (a long gravel hill) from the Katy Trail up Matson Hill. From there the trail is a three-mile loop of 100 percent single track in Daniel Boone country, which weaves up and down several times in a large hollow and is a constant challenge.

"This is some fairly unique terrain, heavily wooded, very dark and shady, with several rock-bottom creek cross-ings," a flier promoting the race warned. "The trail has a ton of elevation change and great natural beauty."

The race gave out two awards — one for "King of the Mountain" as the first racer to reach the top of the one-mile climb, and a second for the first racer to finish the three-mile loop twice.

For his prizes, King received a Missouri State Champ jersey, cash and "swag" — small items like water bottles and other cycling jerseys donated by bike shops.

King said this win has inspired him to stick with

•See Romance Novelist 2D

•See Mountain Bike Champ 2D