

The Irresistible Cast of *Joy & the Butterfly*

By Susan Smith Jones—“Get-to-Know-Them-Better” Nuggets!



SUSAN'S VISION FOR *JOY & THE BUTTERFLY* — Decades ago, Susan Smith Jones rescued a caterpillar that eventually became a beautiful butterfly—and the first seed for *Joy & the Butterfly* was planted. The story remained in her heart for years until it blossomed into the magical world of Eden Valley, a place filled with family, faith, animals, nature, adventure, humor, kindness, gratitude, and wonder.

In many ways, Joy is living the childhood Susan once dreamed of having. Woven throughout the story are treasured lessons Susan learned from her mother and grandmother, along with the values that have guided her own life: believing in God, looking for blessings, caring for others, protecting animals and nature, choosing healthy habits, facing fears with courage, and discovering how much one caring person can positively influence the world.

Susan's vision was never to write a novelette only for children. She wanted to create a timeless, uplifting story that parents, grandparents, teachers, families, and readers of every age could enjoy, discuss, laugh over, and take to heart together. Beneath the adventure and enchantment are gentle reminders about what truly matters in life.

More than anything, Susan hopes readers finish *Joy & the Butterfly* feeling happier, kinder, more grateful, more hopeful, and inspired to let their own heart-light shine wherever they go. It is a story to revisit whenever we need to remind ourselves that moments can hold extraordinary possibilities for joy and blessings.

And because joy is even sweeter when it is shared, *Joy & the Butterfly* makes a meaningful gift for someone you love—a child, friend, teacher, parent, grandparent, or anyone needing encouragement. It can even become a memorable birthday-party favor: a little book of hope, wonder, kindness, and heart-light to carry home.

JOY — Joy has a talent for discovering blessings where other people might walk right past them—and if there's a flower nearby, she has probably already talked to it, hugged the tree beside it, and thanked

God for both. Curious, compassionate, and occasionally delightfully impulsive, she proves that an ordinary day can become extraordinary when you keep your heart open.

VIOLET — The irresistible multicolored butterfly and Joy’s bestie, Violet may be small enough to sit in Joy’s hands, but she carries enough wisdom, love, humor, and mystery to change an entire town. She also knows far more about Joy than any newly hatched butterfly reasonably should—and discovering why is one of the sweetest surprises waiting for readers.

BLAZE — Joy’s twin brother is proof that twins can share a birthday without sharing every opinion—especially when somebody hands Blaze a ladybug assignment when he would much rather have a spider! Beneath his playful grumbling is a loyal, loving brother who grows right alongside Joy and becomes one of her favorite partners in kindness, riding, singing, and adventure.

JUNE — Joy’s mom, June, is raising six children, helping run a bustling farm life, tending gardens, creating homemade goodies, and somehow still finding time to ask questions that get her children thinking. And when “Joy” suddenly becomes “Elizabeth Emelea Grace,” everyone knows Mom has temporarily misplaced her casual voice.

MATT — A gifted craftsman, Matt, Joy’s dad, makes fine furniture and wooden toys, but some of his finest work is building confidence, security, and strong values in his children. He can construct a twelve-foot town sign, rescue an injured eagle, and still remember to ask his family what made them happy that week—which tells you a great deal about this dad.

SAGE — Six-year-old Sage came into the family through adoption and soon discovered that love can make room for new beginnings—and apparently baby zebras, too. Helping care for Zippy gives her a chance to show just how responsible she can be, especially when there might be a pony in her future!

BELLA — At eight, Bella is one of Joy’s adopted sisters and already has a wonderful mixture of tenderness, curiosity, and growing responsibility. She becomes one of Zippy’s special caretakers and discovers that taking care of an animal may be one of life’s most enjoyable ways to grow up.

SCOUT — Another adopted sibling, three-year-old Scout possesses the kind of adventurous curiosity that makes older siblings adore him—and occasionally wish he came equipped with an emergency brake. One unforgettable adventure teaches him that real courage isn’t doing something dangerous; sometimes the bravest thing you can do is make a wise choice and ask for help.

EMMA — Two-year-old Emma may be the youngest member of the family, but little people have a remarkable way of occupying very large pieces of everyone’s heart. She is growing up surrounded by siblings, songs, animals, hugs, faith, and enough activity at Eden Valley Acres to make childhood one grand adventure.

SUNNY — Joy’s rescue beagle puppy, Sunny believes a good day should include fetch, berries, a splash in the brook, a sunny nap, and preferably Joy within paw’s reach. He is so devoted that he even joins Joy in blowing farewell kisses to a caterpillar—which may qualify him as Eden Valley’s most

sentimental beagle.

SWIFTY — Joy’s lovable tan Lab puppy, Swifty, is always ready to chase a ball, follow an adventure, or help administer emergency puppy kisses. He starts out small enough to ride in Champ’s saddle basket but eventually graduates to trotting alongside—apparently nobody bothered to tell Labrador puppies to stop growing.

JUNIPER — This is Joy’s gray rescue kitten with one blue eye and one green eye, making her look as though nature couldn’t choose a favorite color and wisely used both. She rides in Champ’s saddle basket, curls up wherever the action is, and has perfected the very feline skill of occasionally sleeping through events everyone else considers miraculous.

CHAMP — With his pale golden coat, flowing white mane and tail, and the white heart on his forehead, Champ looks special before you ever learn just how special he truly is. He is protective, wise, fond of carrots and apples, and such a trusted friend to Joy that readers may eventually wonder whether calling him “just a horse” is selling him rather short.

EMELEA GRACE — Joy’s favorite teacher knows that some of the best classrooms don’t have four walls. She takes her students outdoors to learn from gardens, birds, bugs, trees, kindness, friendship, and real life—making her the sort of teacher children remember long after they’ve forgotten what was on the test.

PERIWINKLE — The dragonfly, Periwinkle, can zoom upwards, downwards, hover like a helicopter, and stop in midair—and she has eyes that can see almost everything around her. Best of all, she can eat an astonishing number of mosquitoes in a day without gaining weight, a talent many humans would very much like her to explain.

TWINKLES — An iridescent hummingbird, Twinkles is a tiny aerial acrobat who can hover in place and even fly backwards, which seems exceedingly useful on days when you wish you could take back something you just said. Her personal pick-me-up is wonderfully simple: when she feels unhappy, she smiles and starts counting her blessings.

BLOSSOM — This is a boy ladybug with a girl’s name, yellow with black spots instead of the usual red, and has absolutely no intention of apologizing for being different. After being teased for his unusual appearance, he learns to celebrate what makes him unique—and sometimes catches a ride around the garden piggyback on his flying friends.

FRITZ — Fritz is the wise owl of the group, although his personal habits include staying up all night, sleeping during the day, occasionally sleeping upside down, and sneaking berries from Joy’s basket. He specifically advises children not to copy his sleep schedule because, according to Fritz, it will make them very grouchy.

POPPY — A brilliant red male cardinal with an impressive singing voice, Poppy has enough confidence to puff out his chest while explaining just how talented he is. He believes singing makes

almost everything better—including chores—and is always ready to add a little harmony when Eden Valley needs it.

GLITTER — The starfish, Glitter, lives in the magical healing pond and moves around beautifully with tube feet despite having no head, no front, and no rear end—which certainly eliminates several common wardrobe problems. Beneath the humor is a generous little sea star whose gifts prove surprisingly important to Joy and the entire community.

CUDDLES — This baby alpaca once knew what it felt like to be left behind and abandoned, which may be why he becomes exceptionally good at giving love away once he finds a place where he belongs. He adores hugs, wins over children wherever he goes, and even learns to kneel for his prayers and finish with his own tiny alpaca version of “Amen.”

ZIPPY — A loving baby zebra arrives needing a forever home and quickly decides that Cuddles is best-friend material and Champ is worth imitating. He learns tricks remarkably well—although when Sage asks him to “speak,” he tries barking like a dog, proving that even a very smart zebra can occasionally get his species mixed up.

GOLDIE — A magnificent bald eagle, Goldie’s life becomes entwined with Joy’s after compassion and quick action bring her to the magical garden for help. Getting to know Goldie reminds Joy—and readers—that some of nature’s most powerful creatures can also inspire extraordinary tenderness.

MARY FAITH — Joy’s Aunt Mary Faith is her mom June’s twin, a warmhearted creative dynamo who makes beautiful pottery, fragrant soaps and candles, delicious farm goodies, and plenty of happy family memories. If creativity were an Olympic event, Aunt Mary might need to build another shelf for all her gold medals.

DJ — Uncle DJ—David James—is the veterinarian every animal would put on speed dial if only paws and hooves could operate a phone. He cares for Eden Valley’s animals, teaches horseback riding and trail jumping, and helps Joy discover that courage sometimes begins with being a little scared—and getting back in the saddle anyway.

MR. POSITIVITY — For the school principal, who has the nickname of Mr. Positivity, a bad attitude hardly stands a chance of making it through the school doors! As both principal and art teacher, he has an unusual gift for seeing the very best in children—and, just maybe, seeing a few extraordinary things that most grown-ups cannot.

ANGELICA — The beloved town mayor and Main Street shop owner, Angelica somehow manages to run Eden Valley *and* its general store while making both jobs look almost effortless. Warmhearted, energetic, and always ready to turn a good idea into action, she embraces Joy’s gratitude-screen suggestion so enthusiastically that soon the whole community is counting blessings between grocery specials. She also leads the town’s efforts to create a home for children in need. And although Angelica spends plenty of time looking after everyone else, Joy eventually reminds this horse-loving mayor that even mayors need fruits, veggies, water—and a little time in the saddle!