



In-Depth Interview with Susan Smith Jones, PhD

By Cindy Huffman — Mom's Choice Awards

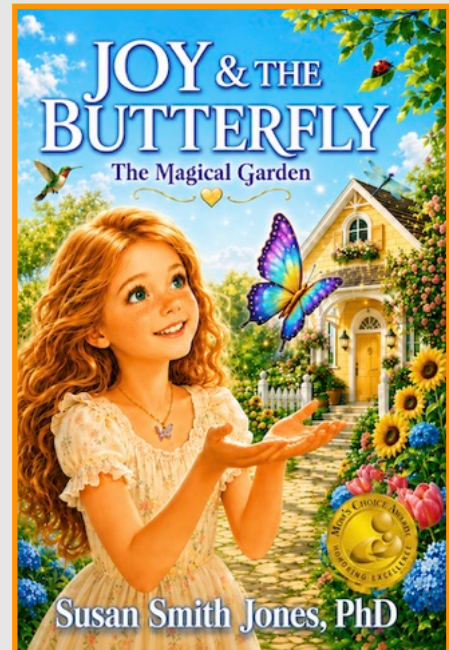
JOY & THE BUTTERFLY: The Magical Garden
GOLD MEDAL WINNER: Best Family-Friendly Book



Get to know Susan up close and personal in this inspiring interview and what motivated her to write this book. She also shares her advice to anyone who would like to get motivated to write their own award-winning book.

A Visit with Susan & Her Award-Winning Novelette, How She Became a Writer & Advice for YOU to Start Your Writing Journey!

Welcome, Mom's Choice readers! Today we have a chance to visit with Susan Smith Jones, PhD, a holistic health expert who specializes in high-level physical, mental, and emotional wellness. We're glad that this Fortune 500 consultant also finds time to write transformative children's books, including her latest, the Mom's Choice Award-winning ***JOY & THE BUTTERFLY: The Magical Garden***. Susan's captivating book tells the uplifting, magical, and heart-centered story of Joy, a 10-year-old girl whose family moves from the noisy city to Eden Valley Acres, a peaceful farm in a loving, small town. Surrounded by nature, animals, a supportive family, and kind neighbors, Joy experiences deep personal growth through her extraordinary friendship with Violet, a butterfly who turns out to be much more than she appears. What begins as a simple school assignment about caterpillars and butterflies becomes a life-changing adventure filled with kindness, gratitude, courage, and the discovery that magic exists all around us — in nature, in family, and within one's own heart.



Introducing Violet, the book's main character and Joy's bestie. This butterfly will enrich your life, too.



Violet is much more than she appears and teaches us all how to find the magic and blessings in ordinary days.



SusanSmithJones.com



Available in Bookstores, Amazon, Libraries & Susan's Website



MCA: Thanks so much for joining us today, Susan. Please tell us a bit about yourself.

For a woman with three of America's most ordinary names, I'm often told that I have certainly made extraordinary contributions in the fields of holistic health, anti-aging, optimum nutrition, balanced, peaceful living, and children's vitality. For starters, for 30 years I taught students, staff, and faculty at UCLA how to be healthy and fit! I am the founder and president of Health Unlimited, a Los Angeles-based consulting firm dedicated to optimal wellness and holistic health education for all ages — children through seniors. I travel internationally as a frequent radio/TV talk show guest (on more than 3,000 programs) and motivational speaker and, these days, it's great when I can do interviews virtually. I am also the author of more than 2,500 magazine articles and many books, including ***WONDERFUL WELLNESS: Enjoy Daily Vim, Verve & Vigor; A HUG IN A MUG; UPLIFTED: 12 Minutes to More Joy, Faith, Peace, Kindness & Vitality***; my faith-based book ***WIRED FOR HIGH-LEVEL WELLNESS***; and my other award-winning children's book ***VEGETABLE SOUP/THE FRUIT BOWL***, which was honored with Disney's iParenting Media Award.

The *President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition* (PCSFN) selected me as one of 10 Healthy American Fitness Leaders — a prestigious honor bestowed upon me in Washington, D.C. Other past winners have included President Ronald Reagan, UCLA Coach John Wooden, and fitness experts Kathy Smith, Richard Simmons, and Denise Austin.



You'd say that I am in a unique position to testify on the efficacy of my basic message that health is the result of the countless choices we make every day. When my back was fractured in an automobile accident, my physician told me that I would never be able to carry "anything heavier than a small purse." I chose not to accept this verdict; within six months, there was no longer any pain or evidence of the fracture. Soon, I fully regained my health and active lifestyle. I attribute my healing to my natural-foods diet, faith, determination, perseverance, balanced living and, most importantly, to my unshakable relationship with and deep connection to God.

Since the accident, I have been constantly active in spreading my faith-based message that anyone can choose to create a healthy, happy, peaceful, and balanced life. I am currently focusing on the well-being of children because they need our support for their physical and mental health more now than ever before. One of my many college degrees from UCLA is a Teaching Credential that has come in very handy when working with children around the world to help foster their health, vitality,

and joy of living. I bring together modern research and ageless wisdom in all of my work and especially in this new children's book ***JOY & THE BUTTERFLY: The Magical Garden***. What's fascinating about this new book is that adults are enjoying the book as much as the children (of all ages) are and that's very gratifying.

MCA: What inspired you to become an author, and how has your personal background or life experiences influenced your writing?

I have been an author for decades with a focus on holistic health for all ages. One of my previous books was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Writing has always been my passion. Even as a teenager, I'd read the books of Jane Austen and thought even back then that I wanted to write books that would touch the lives of millions of people worldwide. With over 33 books published now, this new book, ***JOY & THE BUTTERFLY: The Magical Garden***, is dear to my heart because I offer all of the most important life lessons I learned from my mom and grandmother when I was young. Here are some of the most inspiring life lessons (for children and adults) derived from the storyline. These include...

1. Kindness makes your heart-light shine brighter. **2.** Gratitude changes everything. **3.** You are never alone. **4.** Nature is a healing teacher. **5.** Believe in your own worth. **6.** Help others whenever you can. **7.** Family is a source of strength. **8.** Courage comes from love, not fear. **9.** Ordinary days can be extraordinary. **10.** Community matters. **11.** Keep your heart open to wonder. **12.** You can transform your world through positivity.

This book serves parents, grandparents, teachers, child therapists, home-school families, faith-based communities, librarians, counselors, health and wellness shows, young-at-heart adults, and children of all ages.

MCA: What was your inspiration for writing this book? Was there a specific occurrence that moved you?

Decades ago, I had a similar experience of saving a caterpillar that turned into a butterfly. This is how the book starts out — with Joy saving the caterpillar from harm. Joy is living the life I always dreamed of having as a young girl. She and her family escape the hustle and bustle of city life and move to a farm in a small town. Her experiences with her family, friends, furry pets, horse, teacher, and all of the magical creatures will inspire all readers to live their best lives and look at the world through a more positive attitude. As I try to remind myself in my daily life, Joy learns that each day presents us with a blessed opportunity to learn, grow, live more fully, and optimize our well-being and happiness — provided we pay attention to the whispers of our hearts. We all learn with Joy that each day comes to us bearing precious gifts and opportunities to thrive. We simply need to untie the ribbons! At the end of the book, there is a happy secret divulged that will knock your socks off. But Joy tells everyone in the Introduction from her in the book, and also her Afterword, to keep it a secret from anyone who has not read the book yet so they can discover this wonderful secret on their own.



This book introduces readers of all ages to the magic of nature and a world filled with simple pleasures and blessings everywhere.

I wanted to make it reader-friendly for all ages. While reading skills vary, children ages 6–7 and up can read it independently or aloud to others. Children ages 5–6 can read alongside an adult, while children 2–5 can be read to. Those under 3 can look at the riveting illustrations (by Susan) while the adult points out images of interest and tells the story. In other words, this book will work for the young ones who can't read yet, for children who are gifted at reading, and even for the young-at-heart — any adult who wants to be inspired by uplifting and very positive storylines. This book is for everyone!

Near the end of the book, I've included a chapter titled "*A Note for Adults: 100+ Fun Study Questions & Inquiries*" where I offer questions to ask younger readers to help spark the child's natural eagerness to learn by asking questions about the illustrations and the adventures. This helps them increase their knowledge, develop essential skills, and achieve a series of successes, which promotes healthy self-esteem and a positive attitude about learning. With the right questions, you can help build the child's math and reading readiness skills, ability to recognize shapes and colors, powers of observation, and vocabulary while increasing their knowledge and appreciation of nature, family, love, kindness, butterflies, vitality, and more. The illustrations provide the opportunity to formulate questions (using my suggestions) to nurture these important skills.

MCA: Can you share with us your creative process—how you generate ideas and bring them to life?

I am most inspired being out in nature. When I write, I always ask God and my guardian angels to help me with the process. Whether I am outdoors, at my desk, or at the top of the mountain halfway through one of my early morning hikes, I always carry with me a small tablet of paper and a writing utensil so when a great idea comes to me, I can write it down.



When I'm writing at my home, it always helps me when my kitchen is clean and organized and I'm not surrounded with clutter. If this happens, I know I need to simplify and tidy up my living space and then more ideas start flowing to me to write.

With this book, all of the many characters visited me in my mind — especially when I am not sleep deprived and get ample sleep at night — and have helped to guide me in the journey of writing all the different storylines. Being a lover of nature myself, and working with my guardian angels for decades, these were essential key lessons in the book, such as...

1. How nature strengthens emotional wellness and creativity in children.
2. The mental health benefits of kindness, gratitude, and bravery.
3. How family reading builds trust, bonding, and resilience.
4. Why it's so important for children to unplug from technology and social media as Joy and her siblings do in the book.
5. How to deal with bullying and build confidence at any age.
6. Just as the caterpillar becomes a magical butterfly in the story, each person can grow into something wonderful through kindness, faith, and imagination.

MCA: Those are wonderful lessons. Tell us, what do you hope readers will take away from your book?

Drawn straight from Joy's own voice in the book, this extraordinary adventure reminds every reader that...

1. Magic is real when your heart is open.
2. Kindness makes your heart-light shine brighter.
3. Even on ordinary days, if we pay attention and keep our hearts open and choose to live more mindfully, appreciating the present moment, we can find blessings all around us.

What I hope readers will take away is that this is the perfect story in a novelette form for children of all ages, adults, and families to enjoy together and especially anyone who cherishes uplifting adventures, nature, and spiritual warmth.

MCA: What do you find most rewarding about the writing process? Conversely, what are some of the challenges you face?

I know I was born to be a writer. When ideas come to me, I can write them down anywhere — even waiting in line at the grocery store or stopped at a red light, or when I wake up in the morning. Often, I will go to sleep at night after asking things like... “What should I write about tomorrow” or “Where do you want me to take Joy on her next adventure” and usually when I awaken in the morning, the ideas start flowing into my mind. I keep tablets of paper everywhere next to me; I’m never without them, as I’ve learned that if I don’t write something down, it might flow out of my mind and I’ll forget the idea and inner guidance. I’m a stickler for always writing down these ideas passed on to me from God and my guardian angels.

MCA: Would you tell us how your book contributes to promoting family-friendly values or enhancing the lives of your readers?

There are endless family values supported in this book that will enhance the lives of all readers. Here are just a few:

1. The more kindness you give, the stronger and more radiant your inner light becomes.
2. Practicing daily gratitude opens the heart, lifts the spirit, and helps you notice miracles.
3. Guardian angels are always with you, offering love, guidance, and protection.
4. Trees, gardens, animals, and sunlight nurture emotional well-being and spark creativity.
5. Joy learns not to let bullies define her. Her freckles, quirks, and uniqueness are gifts she learns to appreciate.
6. The “pay it forward” theme shows how helping others creates ripples of goodness.
7. Supportive siblings, parents, and extended family form the foundation for confidence and security.
8. Joy’s bravery grows when she realizes she is surrounded by love — seen and unseen.
9. Simple experiences — riding a horse, picking berries, singing a song — become sacred when approached with joy.
10. A loving community can help foster children, support families, and create miracles together.
11. The magical garden reminds readers that life is full of beauty, surprise, and enchantment for those who look.
12. Just as the caterpillar becomes a butterfly, each person can grow into something wonderful through kindness, faith, imagination, and keeping a positive attitude of gratitude.



MCA: Can you share any memorable moments or feedback from readers that have touched you or reinforced the impact of your work?

Having been a writer for decades, focusing on holistic health for adults and children, I have had countless feedback from people who read my books, see one of my appearances on a TV interview or during a podcast, or

hear me on a radio show and follow my guidance on how to heal the body physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually and are so grateful. It is always delightful to get this feedback.

In fact, just a couple of days ago, a mom reached out to me who read ***JOY & THE BUTTERFLY: The Magical Garden*** and loved it so much that she got copies for her 10-year-old twin children. The main character in the book, Joy, who is also 10 years old, has a twin brother Blaze and they are best friends. This mom's two children each read the book, and once they started, she couldn't get them to stop reading. They were both captivated by the storyline and had a contest to see who could finish first. As a result of these two kids reading the book, they were both happier in general, started looking for ways to show more kindness to themselves and others, and even asked their mom to get extra copies so they could give them as gifts to their friends and cousins.



This was wonderful to hear such positive results of reading this one book. The daughter wanted to take art lessons because Joy in the book is a good artist. Her son wanted to learn how to play a sport because Blaze in the book loved to play baseball with his friends. And both of her children wanted to find special ways to get healthier each day by eating more fruits and veggies and a more natural-foods diet (because that's what Joy and her family ate each day), and to count their blessings and let others know they appreciated them. What's more, both of her children said they no longer wanted anything to do with social media or even having smart phones because that was the way Joy, her brother, and the rest of her family and cousins enjoyed living — without the energy-draining encumbrance of social media and smart phone technology.

All in all, these are the kinds of comments I am hearing back from children and also adults who are loving this captivating book.

My hope is that it would generate a worldwide audience because it can change, in a positive and advantageous way, life on this planet. As Joy learns from her guardian angel, in a world where you can be anything, make being kind top on your list — kind to others and kind to yourself. When you live by the Golden Rule every day, your life will be enriched and much happier.

MCA: What heartwarming feedback! Tell us, what advice would you give to aspiring authors who are just starting their writing journey?

Ask yourself this question: What topic brings you the most passion? Write about what brings you joy and happiness. Don't put off until tomorrow what you could start writing today. Practice some self-discipline and set aside a little time daily to write. See what comes to you. Don't give up. Never give up. If you dream BIG, follow your heart, listen to the whispers of your inner guidance, and always give thanks for this guidance, you will be successful. You have guardian angels with you all the time and they want to work with you to guide you lovingly on your path. Ask for their guidance. I do this every morning when I wake up. They also give you messages daily, but you must pay attention.

There is great power in silence and stillness. Find a few moments daily to be still, breathe deeply, and listen to your inner guidance that's always available to you 24/7. Always know that you are in the right place at the right time and when the direction you are taking changes, that usually means you are being guided to a better path. Just take that higher ground and know that you are always being divinely guided if you keep your thoughts positive, follow your heart, and choose to walk your path with gratitude and kindness.

MCA: Thank you, that's absolutely wonderful advice. Can you share with us your future plans or goals?

To keep writing more and more on the topics that have my heart and for which I feel guided. This book also teaches children and adults how to get healthier and why it's important, and simply writing this book has inspired me to get into the best health of my life — even as a vibrant senior now. Age is a state of mind and as I teach in my books ***WONDERFUL WELLNESS, A HUG IN A MUG,***

UPLIFTED, and ***WIRED FOR HIGH-LEVEL WELLNESS,*** we all

have the keys to unlock our healing powers today so we can conquer illness, extend life, and be uplifted. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote: “Health is our greatest wealth.” And this engaging novelette shows and inspires all readers to get healthy — physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

MCA: Susan, it has been such a pleasure talking with you. We wish you the very best! For more information on Susan, Joy & the Butterfly: The Magical Garden, her other books, and her work, please visit: www.SusanSmithJones.com or www.SusanSmithJones.com/JoyButterfly



A butterfly as a heavenly messenger teaches a young girl how kindness, faith, prayer, hope, gratitude, courage, positivity, and love can transform her life — and her whole community.

VISIT: SusanSmithJones.com 🦋