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Merkel Pens New Series of Books for Young Readers

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Andrews Hires New Gymnastics Coach

The 2006–2007 school year will bring a new face to gymnastics at Andrews University: Christian Lighthall. Gymnastics runs through Lighthall's veins. Both an experienced gymnast and coach, Lighthall comes to Andrews from Mount Pisgah Academy in N.C., where he coached and taught since 1999. He also spent three years as a coach at Hinsdale Adventist Academy in Ill. and one year at Monterey Bay Academy in Monterey, Calif. In 1995, Lighthall graduated with a degree in physical education from Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tenn., where he was a member on the *Gym-Masters* team for five years. But his love for gymnastics stretches back through his days on the Bass Memorial Academy team.



Christian Lighthall will be the new Andrews University Gymnastics coach beginning this fall.

Lighthall brings with him not only fresh ideas for routines and stunts, but a passion for the sport and the Andrews University *Gymnastics* tradition. "Andrews has a long tradition of gymnastics, and is really the birthplace of Adventist gymnastics," he notes. "My goal is to expand and continue the *Gymnastics* legacy, as well as take the program to a new level of excellence. My idea of a strong team is not only based on the performance presented on the mat; a Christ-centered team that is bonded closely together can accomplish many incredible things and touch many lives. My primary goal as a coach is for the *Gymnastics* to be a trophy for Christ."

Lighthall joins the Andrews community with his wife of 11 years, Brandee, and their two pet Boxers. When he's not spotting back flips and choreographing floor routines, Lighthall enjoys traveling, reading, photography, and of course, sports.

Beverly Stout, University Relations
media relations coordinator

Merkel Pens New Series of Books for Young Readers

Ruth Merkel has always loved telling stories. When her granddaughter, Erin, was born, Ruth wanted to share with her not only the family stories she cherished, but the significance of what it meant for Erin to be a sixth generation Seventh-day Adventist and 13th generation American.

"I wanted her to know it wasn't by chance that she was a sixth generation Adventist," Ruth explains, "that it was by God's providence, guidance, and abundant love. Heritage is very important and too often not paid attention to."



Ruth Merkel

So, Ruth started to write, putting together a small booklet of stories for Erin about each of the six generations of Adventist girls in her family. About a year after she finished the booklet, Ruth saw an ad in the *Andrews Agenda*, Andrews University's weekly newslet-

a one-on-one meeting with editors looking for new authors. Ruth showed them her book of stories, and it peeked their interest. Soon, Ruth found herself with a book contract.

Now, almost ten years after that meeting, the first three, in what will be a series of six books, hit the shelves in May 2006. The *Hannah's Girls* series takes young readers back through six generations of Adventist girls, starting with *Ann* (1833–1897), Ruth's great-grandmother and Erin's great-great-great grandmother, *Marilla* (1851–1916), *Grace* (1890–1973), *Ruth*, *Elaine*, and of course, *Erin*. The last three books are expected to be released sometime next year. *Ann*, *Marilla*, and *Grace* are now available through the Review and Herald Publishing Association, the Andrews University Bookstore, Adventist Book Centers across the country, and Amazon.com.

Ruth is a long-time member of the Berrien Springs community, serving as secretary to four Andrews University presidents, as well as attending the university herself, receiving a B.A. in office management in 1989. Currently retired, she and her husband Eugene



ter, about an upcoming visit by representatives from the Review and Herald Publishing Association. Thinking it was a seminar for writers, Ruth called and set an appointment time; however, upon her arrival, she found herself in

recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Ruth's granddaughter, Erin, will be a senior this year at Spring Valley Academy, in Dayton, Ohio.

Beverly Stout, University Relations
media relations coordinator