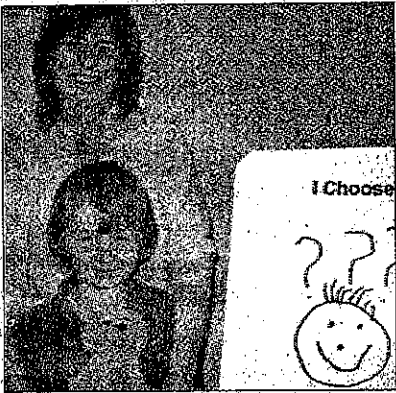


TOP OF THE NEWS



Mom, son create book

Suzin Carr and her son, Chandler, hold up "I Choose," a book that Carr wrote and Chandler illustrated. The book is available online at www.illuminatedpublishing.com and costs \$8.95. Photo by Ashley Reams Dunn.

Carr family hopes 'I Choose' children's book inspires many

By Ashley Reams Dunn
Staff Writer

LUTZ - Eight-year-old Chandler Carr knows the importance of making good choices.

His parents, Suzin and James Carr, have taught him that he has the power to make his own everyday decisions and that each of those choices has its own consequence.

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I CHOOSE, from page 1

It's a message that Suzin and Chandler have turned into a book called "I Choose."

"I wrote it a few years ago one night," Suzin Carr said. "It just came to me."

Using simple language, the small paperback describes a variety of choices everyone makes each day. Carr arranged the choices so that they rhyme, which gives the story its own cadence. Each choice takes up one page, and Chandler, who loves art, drew a picture for each one.

"I'm so glad he did because kids are loving this book," Carr said, explaining that they connect with Chandler's basic, stick-figure artwork. "Children can wrap their emotions around it."

Chandler nodded.

"Even if they don't understand the words, they can tell by the pictures what it means," he said.

"It's very simple," Carr added. "Kids are filled with so many extra things these days - and everybody was saying, 'You need more color and bigger pictures.'"

She shook her head.

"It's simple words and simple drawings," she said.

And the message isn't just for kids; adults can also benefit from the book's straightforward, yet powerful meaning, Carr said.

"People now, especially in this economy, are looking for direction," she said. "It's already inside of us."

She has sent copies of the book to influential TV personalities, such as Oprah Winfrey, and political leaders, such as President Barack Obama.

Publishing "I Choose": The Carr family, of Hillsborough Lutz, has a list of goals that they want to accomplish, and running a family business is one of them. Suzin Carr has a background in printing, so the family felt comfortable publishing the book themselves.

After Chandler drew the pictures on standard copier paper, James Carr scanned them onto his computer and resized them to fit each page. Then, the family set up their own publishing company, Illuminated Publishing (after Chandler, whose name means "he who brings light"). The book went to the copy-right office last year and the family received copies from the printer in November. The next step was selling "I Choose."

"I scrambled for any place we could get in - like craft shows - anybody that would listen," Suzin Carr said.

"And everybody listened," Chandler added.

Carr and Chandler have set up booths at St. Tim's Catholic Church in Lutz, Nolan Middle School in Bradenton, the Carrollwood Fall Festival, Independent Day School in Tampa, Freedom Elementary School in

Bradenton, the Lake Park Arts and Crafts Show, Berean Academy in Lutz, the Kiwanis of Safety Harbor Craft Extravaganza, and the Tampa Downtown Market. They'll be at the Tampa Downtown Market in Lykes Gaslight Square on Jan. 30 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The response at these events has been great, Carr and Chandler agreed.

"I signed maybe 200 books at the first signing," Chandler said.

"We've sold way more than we expected," Carr added, declining to give the exact amount. "It's rare now that a day goes by that we don't sell books."

Chandler said his marketing tactic is to point to the last page in the book, which is blank and reads, "Draw yourself as you choose..."

"It's the only book you can draw yourself in," he said.

The book is also available online at www.illuminatedpublishing.com. It costs \$8.95. The ISBN is 978-0-615-22551-7. It can be found on eBay, as well.

About the author and illustrator: "I Choose" is Suzin Carr's first book, yet it's not her first published piece. One of her poems was published just after Chandler was born. In college, she majored in English Literature.

"It's really been a neat family experience," she said of creating "I Choose."

Chandler is a third-grader at Learning Gate Community School, an independent school in Lutz. He likes playing piano and guitar, and he enjoys being creative.

"He just loves to draw," Carr said. "In fact, he made his own shower curtain."

Chandler held up a book he got for Christmas called "How to Design Video Games" and explained that he wants to be a video game designer when he grows up. He said illustrating "I Choose" helped him learn how to turn an idea into a finished product.

He said he thinks the book will empower anyone who reads it.

"I just hope that a lot of kids will get it and be happy with it and do what it says," he said. "What happens with good choices?" Carr asked.

"You always help out," Chandler replied.

Title: "I Choose"
Author: Suzin Carr
Illustrator: Chandler Carr
Cost: \$8.95
ISBN: 978-0-615-22551-7
Available at:

www.illuminatedpublishing.com
Next book signing: Tampa Downtown Market, Lykes Gaslight Square, Jan. 30, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Check www.illuminatedpublishing.com for more book signing opportunities.

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