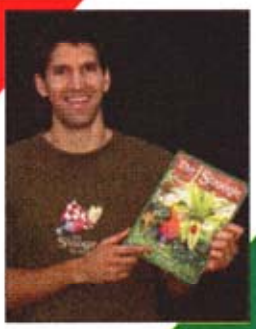


Author goes back to school to encourage kids to read



Springwood artist, illustrator and writer, Dr Cameron Stelzer is helping to encourage a new generation of budding authors and illustrators, through a series of school workshops.

The workshops are aimed at students from preschool to Year 12 and cover basic illustration, writing your own story, character development, meaning through imagination, making banners featuring images of the natural and urban environments of the local area and of people and community, murals and art for kids.

Dr Stelzer said the workshops were developed around education guidelines of state and private schools and encouraged both girls and boys to be more active in reading and creative arts.

"Workshops give the students an understanding of several of the processes involved in putting together an illustrated book by practically getting them to create things themselves," he said. "It also encourages them in their learning and brings to life things they learn in English and art."

Dr Stelzer plans to begin working with classes and groups of students to actually write and illustrate books about what life means to them, where they live and their views of the future.

"It's usually adults writing and illustrating for children but I am keen to turn that around and give the students an opportunity to produce a book to show their parents, friends and community with the guidance of a writer and artist," he said.

He also performs puppet plays and short dramas on social issues for younger age groups and there are special workshops based on Dr Stelzer's first book, *The Stroogle*, recently released by Daydream Press.

A vibrant and active tale in the tradition of the ugly duckling, it is the story of a colourful creature that hatches from a purple egg in the

garden. His adventures begin when he climbs up to the farmhouse for breakfast and falls into a bowl of porridge.

When locked in a cage by the farmer he makes a superhero's escape and dives out of a window, meets a friendly mouse and together they rescue several garden gnomes from a hungry fox. But there is a serious side to the fun.

The simple rhyming text leads the young reader through an adventure of rejection, misunderstanding and sadness to friendship, courage and acceptance. Written and illustrated during the year Dr Stelzer spent working at the Natural History Museum in London.

The idea came one day when he was stationed at the dark back entrance of an unpopular travelling exhibition about birds that evolved from dinosaurs.

"I had the most boring, uninspiring job imaginable. I felt so small and insignificant, standing in the dark, in a huge building, in a huge city, just waiting for something exciting to happen," he recalls.

"Then out of the blue I had this idea of a tiny creature full of life and colour bursting out of an egg saying 'hey world look at me', and the world staring back saying 'what the...?'"

"Misunderstood and strange, this character became my escape from the monotony of a grey existence and filled me with childlike enthusiasm."

His hero's name came to him during a visit to Germany. "I discovered a small shop near the famous Hofbräuhaus in Munich which sold only strudel: apple, raspberry, rhubarb, even spinach and vegetable - it had everything," he said.

"For a poor backpacker this was food fit for the gods. As soon as I'd eaten my first piece I just had to go back in and try some more.

"Since my little character also has an enormous appetite I wondered what would be an exciting name that sounds like strudel? And I came up with 'Stroogle'."

The *Stroogle* primary schools' workshop includes a book reading and talk about the creation of the book by the author, a personalised signed copy of

The *Stroogle* for each participant, a create your own character workshop, a puppet play featuring The *Stroogle* on the theme of acceptance and friendship and a complementary copy of The *Stroogle* for the school's library.

Costs of the workshops vary and depend on the needs of the school and the number of students participating although generally it does not cost each student more than \$5 for a 1/2 day of activities.

Daydream Press also offers free 'Stroogle' workshops and activities run by Dr Stelzer for schools that use the books, t-shirts and other products as a fundraising activity for their Parents

and Friends or equivalent association.

Some workshops are also funded by various community programs so are free to the school and students.

To find out more about the workshops visit www.daydreampress.com or call 3388 6850.

