

Local editor's nightly dog walks inspires children's book

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November 21, 2003

STAMFORD -- For more than 25 years, Rick Arruzza had searched for his creative muse.

Arruzza, an editor for a Greenwich financial firm put his creative writing on hold to raise his family. He found his niche after adopting a white and black spotted pointer pit-bull he named Sparky. Nightly walks with Sparky inspired Arruzza to write a children's book "Sparky's Walk," which he also published in Spanish.

"Sparky got into so many situations in the neighborhood when we went for our nightly walks that I had to write about it," Arruzza told third-graders at Julia A. Stark elementary school Monday during a book reading. "If you have a story to tell and you're really enthusiastic about it, it's not that hard to write a book. You have to believe in your story."

Sparky was adopted five years ago after she narrowly escaped death at a New York city pound. The kindness of one kennel worker at the pound helped save the puppy from being euthanized two days after her arrival. Several weeks later, Adopt-A-Dog, a Greenwich-based dog and cat rescue organization, loaded its van with dogs and cats, and the kennel worker pleaded for just one more.

"When one of the workmen pull you off to the side and beg you to please take one more, we couldn't resist," said Marcia Bigger, adoptions manager at Adopt-A-Dog. "She was so sweet and so loving we thought she had a battery in her backside because her tail was wagging all the time."

Arruzza donates \$1 for each of his book sales to Adopt-A-Dog.

"Every little bit helps," Bigger said. "We have about 60 to 70 dogs and 42 cats to feed every day, so every little bit helps."

So far, he has sold 75 books at his company. Barrett's Bookstore in Darien and Just Books in Greenwich also are selling the book. It also can be found on Amazon.com and at Thrifty Boutique in downtown Stamford, where Arruzza volunteers on weekends.

"Sparky's story is really amazing," Arruzza said. "When we first saw her, she bowled over my son with licks and we knew we had to have her."

Her curious nature comes out in the book, which is written for children ages 4 to 8. Arruzza said he wrote the book in prose but quickly changed it to a fast-paced verse, much like their nightly walks he and Sparky take around their Glenbrook neighborhood.

Stark school featured the book this week at its scholastic book fair during National Education Week, which concluded today.

"We think it's great to have a local author come in to speak with our students about the writing process," said Stacey Staff, a third-grade teacher. "To get a first-hand account on what it's like to

go through the process of crafting an idea into a story really helps them see the results of hard work."

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