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The Oregonian

Moving? Coloring book might help a preschooler

Tigard author - She knows the subject, having moved her own children six times

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A preschooler in a family preparing to move can't read the handbooks written for older children, but Danelle Till knew that many young children absorb information from coloring books.

Till, who has children 11 and 14, thought about the questions a child of 3 or 4 might have about leaving one neighborhood for another. Then she developed a coloring book, "Max's Moving Adventure," with illustrations by Portland artist Joe Spooner.

Till, 42, who has taught elementary school, high school and Sunday school, is director of sales and the accountant for First Books. The Tigard-based company specializes in how-to books for people moving from one town to another. It also has entertainment guides for those who have arrived in a new city.

Till has been with the company for more than four years, but with a background in math and teaching, she didn't envision herself as a writer. As the staff brainstormed ways to add information for young children to its line of publications, however, she began thinking about a coloring book.

"Hey, I think I can do this," she remembers telling company President Jeremy Solomon.

Solomon, a literary agent for 16 years, grew up in Wisconsin. He developed his company after he moved to New York and got acquainted with Manhattan through an out-of-print book. The author no longer wanted to update her book, so Solomon picked up the idea and began expanding it.

After moving to Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston and Chicago again, he arrived in Oregon eight years ago because he liked the state, Solomon said.

Till, who has moved her children six times in seven years, including from California to Tigard, realized that she had some insight into moving adventures. In presenting information, she said, "I think it needs to come from a child's experience."

Her main character is Max, who admits that he has mixed feelings about moving. "I took pictures in my mind and with a camera of everything I wanted to remember," he says in the book, which Spooner designed in a cartoon style.

The book includes activities, such as connecting the dots to create a picture, helping a pet through a maze to find its new bed, and pages for children to draw their own pictures.

First Books published the coloring book a year ago, Till said, and has sold about 1,000. It can be ordered online at www.firstbooks.com for \$8.95 plus shipping. It also is included in moving kits that corporations can buy when transferring employees to new towns.

Now that her first adventure in publishing is moving well, Till said, she's thinking about her next book.

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