

Fibblestax from page E1

future of the written word but the most visited site on the Internet is Amazon.com, which sells books."

Making reading enjoyable

Scillian believes "writing is a word that's intimidating to a lot of kids." He hopes Fibblestax changes that by making reading and writing enjoyable. When Scillian reads to children around town, he always asks them their favorite words. His favorite is "spricket."

"Messages are better left in bottles than in books," Scillian said. "I don't want to beat people over the head. I want kids to have fun with words."

Although Scillian paints and draws and frequently donates work to auctions benefiting groups such as the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra, he felt illustrations for the book were best left to someone else. That's where Sleeping Bear Press came

in. They contacted Darnell who'd previously submitted storyboards and a finished illustration for another author's book proposal. Darnell and Scillian have never met. The East Lansing illustrator faxed most of the project directly to Sleeping Bear Press.

"Fibblestax is really close to how I'd envisioned it," said Scillian, whose second children's book, *A is for America*, is scheduled to be published in the fall. "There's a gentleness and a medieval look to it."

Darnell is looking forward to meeting Scillian during their book signing 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 5, at the Elizabeth Stone Gallery in Birmingham. She wants to find out more about the process that went into creating the story she describes as having "a kind of a magic going on."

Even though this is her first picture book, Darnell has 19 years of professional illustrating experience to her credit. She earned her bachelor of fine arts degree from the University of Michigan School of Art in Ann Arbor.

"For me it was an involved process," said Darnell, an art instructor at Lansing Community College. "I began by reading the story and thinking about the characters. The story opens with the essence of it being a dream. I looked for natural breaks in the story to get a sense of pacing. Then I worked up a story board and ran it by the editors. A test illustration gave them a sense of technique and palette. The process took about 10 weeks to complete. It's primarily done in colored pencil with some oil crayon."

Darnell makes it all sound so easy. But there were a few bumps in the road for the illustrator who's been interested in art since she "was old enough not to eat the crayon."

"One of the interesting things about the story is that all the action is mental and verbal but not a lot of physical action, so I used techniques such as color movement in the background. In the crowd scene I showed people from different angles."

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A winner

A former children's librarian, Elizabeth Stone likes the combination of Scillian's writing and Darnell's illustrations. Stone keeps tabs on children's literature at her gallery on North Woodward.

The walls are lined with art work from books with talking animals. "Devin Scillian's book is a winner," said Stone. "Children, parents and teachers will love this book. The catchy rhythm of the story and the appealing illustrations of Kathryn Darnell work well together. The story is a very

clever approach. Teaching things like etymology is never easy for teachers. This book should be a great help."

Scillian will sign books at the following locations:

- 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 9, Barnes & Noble, Troy.
- 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 19, Barnes & Noble, Rochester Hills.
- 10 a.m. Monday, May 22, Barnes & Noble, Bloomfield Hills.

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Auction item tells 'Miracle Birth Stories'

Farmington Observer reporter Tim Smith and Devin Scillian, news anchor for WDIV-TV (Channel 4), recently teamed up to sign copies of Smith's *Miracle Birth Stories of Very Premature Babies - Little Thumbs Up!* for donation to the WTVS-TV (Channel 56) auction.

Smith, a Livonia resident, donated copies of his book to both the on-air and on-line versions of the auction, scheduled through Sunday, May 7.

He is hopeful that his auction item will catch the attention of anyone in a position to supply the books to Neonatal Intensive Care Unit resource libraries or parent support groups.

Miracle Birth Stories of Very Premature Babies, published in spring 1999 by Connecticut-based Greenwood Publishing Group, was sparked by the pre-



Signing books: Devin Scillian (left), news anchor for WDIV-TV (Channel 4), and Farmington Observer reporter Tim Smith sign copies of Smith's book.

mature birth of Smith's daughter, Elizabeth. She was born at 25 weeks gestation, weighing 1 pound 14 ounces, in November 1994. Later, he found other families in Michigan and around the

country, and captured their captivating, personal stories for the book.

Scillian, the father of premature twins, Christian and Madison, wrote the book's preface.

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8-8:45am check-in, 9am start time. 10am Kid's Run. This running and walking event through the Cranbrook grounds raises funds for Institute education programs. Registration fee required; for information call 248 645.7721.

Planetarium Programs
Young Stargazers Sky Journey - Sat/Sun at 11:30am. Planet Alignment 2000 - Friday at 8pm, Sat/Sun at 12:30 & 3pm through June 4. Laser Swing - Friday at 7 & 9pm, Sat/Sun at 2 & 4pm through June 4. New planetarium programs debut June 9!
Admission to the planetarium is extra.

Sunday Brunch and Science Lecture
May 14; 11am brunch followed by noon lecture
Dr. Leon Stodulski, Conservation Service Laboratory, the Detroit Institute of Arts, draws upon his 25 years of experience to describe how fragile and sometimes priceless works of art are investigated, restored and preserved. For information and reservations call 248 645.3259 or 248 645.7721.
\$18 members, \$20 non-members

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