

# Local author touts upcoming children's book

By COLETTE COSTLOW

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Despite the uncommon partnership, Clearfield County author Jake Lockett combined his experiences with asthma and his love for space to create an accessible children's book.

His debut book, "My Life As An Asthmanaut," follows a young boy named Jacob who feels like an astronaut floating in space with an empty air tank during an asthma attack. Using tools to manage his asthma, he comes back to Earth and helps those in need find solid ground, too.

"It (asthma) is one of the most common illnesses in the world," he said. "I want kids to feel understood and brave in their everyday challenges."

Illustrated by Adriana Predoi, the book released April 14, one of four stories included in Free Spirit Publishing's Disability Books for Kids series.

He was also a featured author at the Pennsylvania School Librarian Association conference on April 16 at the Blair County Convention Center.

Lockett's book already received acclaim from notable figures such as Chris Nee, creator of Disney's "Doc McStuffins" and "Vampirina."

"I wish this book existed when my son was young and struggling to manage his asthma," Nee said, "It would have made him feel less alone."

As a kid, Lockett said he experienced asthma attacks that left him feeling isolated from participating in activities other kids were involved in. He considered writing a book about asth-



Courtesy photo

**Clearfield County author Jake Lockett's debut book, "My Life As An Asthmanaut," is one of four stories included in Free Spirit Publishing's Disability Books for Kids series.**

ma geared toward kids over the years, but the idea never came to fruition.

Until he heard about Free Spirit Publishing's open call for a children's book on disabilities.

"I thought it was a great chance to help kids with asthma," he said.

Drawing on his love for space, he noticed that an astronaut's experience is comparable to that of someone experiencing an asthma attack. The publishers connected the ideas, and Lockett ran with his one-of-a-kind story.

He started his first draft in summer 2023, as its original publishing date was pushed back from summer 2025. Eventually, his story became a part of Free Spirit Publishing's Disability Books for Kids series that also features blindness, autism, epilepsy, ADHD and

Tourette's syndrome.

Totaling about 36 pages, Predoi was tasked with designing the images included in Lockett's story.

Lockett said he loved Predoi's illustrations, as she effectively conveyed the scene's emotions and the characters' kindness and empathy.

"She was able to add more whimsy to imagination-based sequences," he said. "She described how it is to imagine things as a kid."

Lockett's sister, Holly Lockett, said he dedicated much time and effort to developing his story.

"That's what makes him such a great writer to me," she said. "He wanted to make sure that every part of the story would resonate with people who have asthma or not."

After looking at current children's books on the market, she said many authors avoid storylines that include sad, lonely or scared characters. But this book encourages readers to express their emotions while showing others with disabilities love and support.

"Even as an adult with asthma, this book puts me in a comfortable place," Holly said.

When parents pick up Lockett's book, he hopes they see it as an earnest and well-meaning story about recognizing asthma. The story can help children with asthma feel understood and hopeful while living with their disability.

"I hope parents give them this story to show them that they can do anything and they can do so much," he said.

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