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Royal Oak kids' effort is one for the books

By ERICA BLAKE
The Oakland Press

Amanda Andreski knows what it's like to chuckle, and she's felt what it's like to be sad. Most 8-year-olds do. But this third-grader also knows her daily problems pale next to ill children, kids who have to dig deep within themselves to find the gift of laughter.

■ ROYAL OAK

That's why Amanda, her friends and students at Whittier Elementary School in Royal Oak have made it their mission to share a story of hope with sick and traumatized children.

The children — with the help of parents, community members and Borders book store — have collected money to donate copies of the book, "The Jester Has Lost His Jingle" by David Saltzman, and Jester plush dolls to area hospitals.

To date, students have collected \$1,100, but they hope to raise \$5,000.

"I like the idea because we can help other kids, and we are giving money to buy them dolls and books so they can be happy and feel better," said Amanda, who helps collect money each week for the campaign.

"My teacher read the book to me and the class. I thought it was sad at the beginning, but happy in the end."

It's a story about hope and the pursuit of laughter. Published independently by the author's family, "The Jester Has Lost His Jingle" depicts a vibrant Jester who, along with his sidekick, Pharley, searches for laughter that seems to have disappeared from the land.

Only by looking deep within themselves and others were they able to bring a sense of humor back to the people.

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Whittier Elementary hopes to bring smiles to children who may feel they have little to laugh about, said PTA co-vice president Beth Reaume.

"The teachers have read the story to kids in class because we wanted to make sure the kids are really aware of why they're collecting money for these books," said Reaume, whose two sons are both donating \$1 a week from their allowances. "We want them to realize that just because someone's in need doesn't mean they lack a house or food. Sometimes people just need support and some comforting."

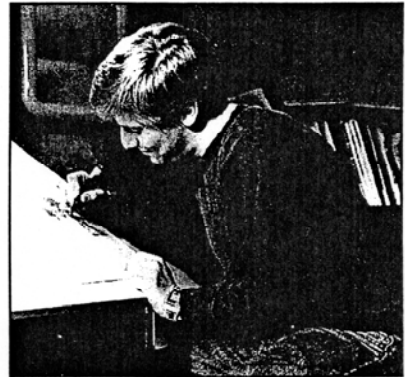
Jester and Pharley were born in the mind of a young man who, himself, was looking for laughter.

Diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease during his senior year at Yale University, David Saltzman used his creations to get him through treatments and failing health.

Saltzman died March 2, 1990, 11 days before his 23rd birthday.

His creations — Jester and Pharley — have lived on.

Saltzman's mother, Barbara, watched her



Author David Saltzman, 22, created the children's book before his death from Hodgkin's disease

son work on the children's book he chose to do as his senior project.

When David died, Barbara and her husband, Joe, published the 64-page book, their son's legacy.

"We had promised him before his death that the book would be published as he had envisioned, and that it would be given free to children with cancer and other needs," said Barbara Saltzman, who is the president and chief operating officer of the Jester Co., Inc., based in California.

She will read her son's book today at Whittier Elementary to the students working to raise money for the project.

"We want to get the book into the hands of the many children who need to hear its message. That message is that laughter is inside every one of us, and we can help find it one person at a time."

Whittier Elementary is getting some help on the project from Borders book store in Oakland Mall. Store managers agreed to sell the Jester book and doll packets to the school at cost, so that as many as possible can be donated to Royal Oak Beaumont Hospital and Children's Hospital in Detroit.

Barbara Saltzman will be at the Oakland Mall Borders from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, signing books and reading the story.