



Red Wagon

Written by:
Kathy McGougan
Illustrated by:
Sally Hale



Buddy's
Christmas
Joy

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Kathy McGougan (holding Buddy) and Sally Hale will be at The Country Bookshop Sunday, Dec. 4, at 2 p.m.

He's a Good Buddy

Moore County Teachers Spread Christmas Joy With New Book

BY MELANIE COUGHLIN

Special to The Pilot

Like most 5-year-olds, Buddy has a long wish list for Christmas. Unlike other little ones dreaming of gifts galore, Buddy is a dog, and he learns though his work as a therapy dog that true Christmas joy comes in helping others.

This is the premise of Kathy McGougan's book "Buddy's Christmas Joy," released this fall. Inspired by McGougan's real-life Buddy, a Jack Russell terrier certified as a therapy dog, the book is the 36th installment in her self-published "Buddy" series.

McGougan will read "Buddy's Christmas Joy" for children's story hour at The Country Bookshop on Sunday, Dec. 5, at 2 p.m.

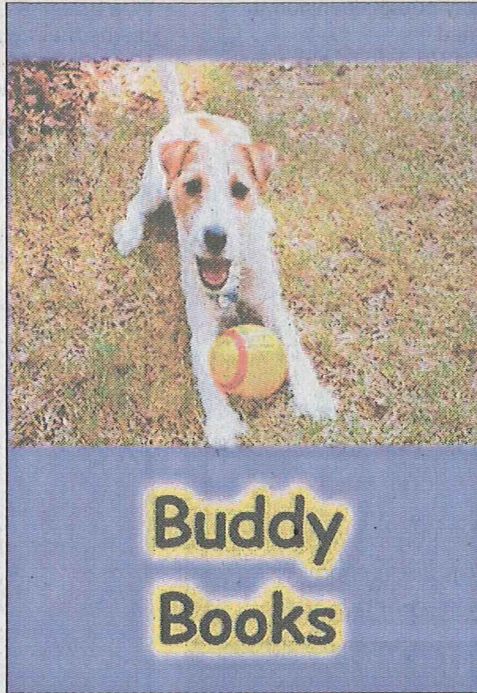
Illustrator Sally Hale will join her with a sketchpad to show children how she

draws Buddy, and Buddy himself will be there to meet the children.

McGougan, a reading recovery and early literacy teacher at Pinehurst and West Pine Elementary schools, started writing about Buddy four years ago at the encouragement of her friends.

"I wanted to see if I could write," McGougan says. "I've always had this thing in my head about wanting to be an author."

She enrolled in a self-publishing class at



Sandhills Community College and wrote her first books, short readers intended for young children, using photos of Buddy for artwork. The series employs frequent repetition and high-frequency words to aid the developing reader. All the stories feature Buddy's real-life antics.

"Whatever Buddy does, I'll write about," says McGougan. "Buddy was about a year old when I started, and he was a naughty puppy, so he gave me a lot of stories."

She intended to use the readers for her

students only, but when a co-worker asked to buy copies, McGougan started to think of the series as a business.

Today, she sells the books and companion merchandise, including a stuffed Buddy and Buddy posters, through her business, Buddy Books Publishing LLC.

The main consumers of the series are teachers; McGougan has sold more than 15,000 copies of the books in 35 states.

"Buddy's Christmas Joy" is the second in the series that uses illustrations instead of photographs. McGougan partnered with fellow teacher Sally Hale when she decided to branch into illustrated books with the title "Fixin' Buddy's Little Red Wagon."

"I thought, 'Who do I know who could do this?'" McGougan recalls. "I knew Sally was a great artist, and I called and asked if she would be game."

Hale, a visual arts teacher at Pinehurst and West Pine Elementary schools, was excited to take on the challenge.

"It was the first time I'd ever done anything like that," says Hale, "and it all fell together. It was wonderfully fun."

"The illustrations are really fun and bring it to life," says McGougan, smiling as she shows a page of the book on which Buddy plays poker at a nursing home.

The idea for "Buddy's Christmas Joy" came from McGougan's volunteer work visiting schools, nursing homes and rehabilitation centers.

Certified as a therapy dog by Bon-Clyde Learning Center in Sanford, Buddy accompanies McGougan on all her visits.

He is also certified as a "Tail Waggin' Tutor," a program of Moore County Schools

in which children read to dogs.

Buddy is equally beloved by preschoolers and the elderly. Residents of nursing homes post pictures of Buddy on their walls, and Hale says kindergarteners recognize Buddy when they start school.

"I get little people who say, 'Oh, I know Buddy!'" says Hale. "He's really a little comfort, a friendly buddy."

It is that pleasure that McGougan captures in "Buddy's Christmas Joy."

"Every time we head out (to volunteer), I say, 'We're going out to spread the Buddy joy,'" McGougan says. "The book is about Christmas joy and spreading it."

"Buddy's Christmas Joy" is \$9.95 and is written at a second-grade reading level, making it appropriate for preschool-aged children up through early readers. It may be purchased from McGougan's website (www.buddybookspublishing.com) or at The Country Bookshop.

Melanie Coughlin is a Pinehurst freelance writer. Contact her at coughlin@embarqmail.com.

WANT TO GO?

WHAT: Book Signing

WHEN: Sunday, Dec. 4
2 p.m.

WHERE: The Country Bookshop
in Southern Pines

INFORMATION: (910) 692-3211