

Whitefish teen talks to students about book publishing experience



By ALANA LISTOE - IR Staff Writer - 02/09/07

Baxter Graham originally wrote book when he was 7 years old

It's not what you have on the outside; it is what's on the inside that counts.

That's the lesson to learn from having stinky feet.

That's what 7-year-old author Baxter Owen Graham of Whitefish was saying when he wrote the story, "Old King Stinky Toes."

Graham, now 13, was at Broadwater Elementary School Wednesday talking with students about being creative, reading, writing and saving their work.

"I feel that by doing this it will encourage kids to write and maybe someday end up like me," he said.

The published book, illustrated by James R. Martin, Graham's fourth-grade teacher, is about a good king with stinky toes. Continually insulted, he earns his kingdom's respect by fighting off a mean dragon with the smell of his toes.

Graham set out to write the story that his parents would keep in a hope chest. Six years later, his father and former teacher decided to publish it.

Shae Valerio, a first-grader in Mary Laren's class, sat captivated in the audience in the crowded library. Valerio said she enjoyed hearing the story and listening to Graham.

"I liked how he (the king) scared away the dragon with his stinky feet," she said, noting the fact she does not have stinky feet.

Valerio wrote a book herself about a bear that tries to steal food from a campsite. It hasn't been published, but after hearing Graham's story she hopes it will.

Broadwater Elementary was one of 11 Helena elementary schools Graham is scheduled to visit this week.

Graham says being published was second to the writing, and he has since moved on to composing a novel. The story is about a boy who believes he is a dragon and realizes through the pages that he is human.

Graham suggests that young people save their work. He says he tries to write at least 500 words a day and prefers to work in his bed or in his family's furnace room.

“Don't let your work become refrigerator art,” he said.

He also told the students they have to read, because, “It is one of the most important parts of writing.”

“Old King Stinky Toes” is for sale at the Montana Book Company and sells for \$15.95.

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