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Greater Springfield
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NEWS



October
2022

Local pens children's book, includes Habitat volunteer in storyline



Author Erin Chrusciel holds up her first children's book, "Who Built My Ziggy-Zaggy School?" The story is narrated by "Tyeka," who is named for local carpenter and Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity volunteer Tyeka Robinson.

Spend minutes with local photographer and author Erin Chrusciel and her excitement is obvious, if not contagious. East Longmeadow resident Erin recently self-published her first children's book, "Who Built My Ziggy-Zaggy School?" and is on a mission to get the hardback into the hands of Springfield's children.

Erin's book is the story of Tyeka, a child who narrates, in an easy-to-

understand way, the construction process of her school: MGM Head Start Child and Family Center in Springfield. The story starts with architecture designs and concludes with questions and activities for the audience of 3- to 5-year-olds. Tyeka, the main character, is named for local carpenter Tyeka Robinson, who she met on the jobsite and who often volunteers

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Fall Festival is almost here. Buy your tickets

Support Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity and buy your Fall Festival tickets today. At just \$50, the evening promises an opportunity to network, catch up with old friends, sample great food from at least seven local eateries, enjoy a cash bar, and bid on phenomenal auction items.

Held at Twin Hills Country Club in Longmeadow, the event will be emceed by a deejay and offer prizes such as center ice Boston Bruins tickets and Boston Red Sox tickets. Restaurants offering sweet and savory samplings, include MexiRico, which is owned by a Greater Springfield Habitat homeowner; Texas Roadhouse, Macken's Specialty Sliders, and Munich Haus German Restaurant.



FALL FEASTIVAL

You're invited
Thursday, Nov. 10
5:30pm
Tickets: \$50 each

Greater Springfield
Habitat for Humanity

habitatspringfield.org/fall-festival

Take part in this worthwhile event that raises money for Greater Springfield Habitat.

For more information, go to habitatspringfield.org/fall-festival



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FALL FEASTIVAL

Thursday, Nov. 10
5:30pm

Tickets: \$50 each
Twin Hills Country Club,
Longmeadow

FOOD. AUCTION. CASH BAR. DJ. FUN.




BUILDING COMMUNITY

habitatspringfield.org/fall-festival
ofarrell@habitatspringfield.org

Welcome to the board, Ian and Nadine

Welcome to the Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) team, Ian and Nadine.

Ian Coddington and Nadine Maggi come to Greater Springfield Habitat's Board of Directors from Meyers Brothers Kalicka and PeoplesBank, respectively. Both said they are longtime fans of the nonprofit housing organization and wanted to step off the sidelines and into more active roles.

Ian, a senior associate at Meyers Brothers Kalicka, a certified public accounting firm in Holyoke, said his specialty lies in accounting and he hopes to help with fiscal projects and to ensure GSHFH stays compliant. Nadine, a first vice president at PeoplesBank, said she would like to share her banking expertise to further the mission.

"Doing the Habitat for Humanity builds is one of my favorite outreach activities because it means so much for families to get to have a house of their own," said Ian, who also works on several nonprofit accounts at his firm. "I spoke to John O'Farrell, GSHFH Fundraising and Volunteer coordinator, during one of the builds expressing interest in doing more and he reached out. I'm really excited to be a part of something that helps my local community."

John said GSHFH is always eager to welcome new

board members as every one brings a different perspective and one common goal – to grow the organization's awareness in the community and raise donations.

"Each member of the board plays a valuable role in our collective success," he said. "I look forward to working with Ian and other members of the board in our fundraising efforts throughout the year."

Nadine said she's equally thrilled to be a part of the board.

"I have always loved Habitat for Humanity's mission and have seen firsthand the wonderful things that they have done for families," Nadine said. "I have always wanted to be a part of that. I feel very fortunate to be a part of the Habitat family and look forward to my time as a board member."

In addition to volunteering on build sites, Nadine said she also participated in community activities, such as helping new GSHFH partner families with loans through PeoplesBank and first-time home buying classes.

"Nadine Maggi has been a longtime supporter and frequent participant in GSHFH events," said Anne Eisenman, president of the Greater Springfield Habitat board of directors. "Her knowledge and experience regarding nonprofits, banking, and mortgages makes her a valuable asset to the board."

SPOTLIGHT ON

Nadine Maggi
Board member
of Longmeadow, MA



What is your most random impulse buy? A bread basket from Italy for my daughter.

If you could switch lives with a celebrity for a weekend, who would you choose and why? This is a tough one, I think Adele. I would just love to be able to sing with such a beautiful voice.

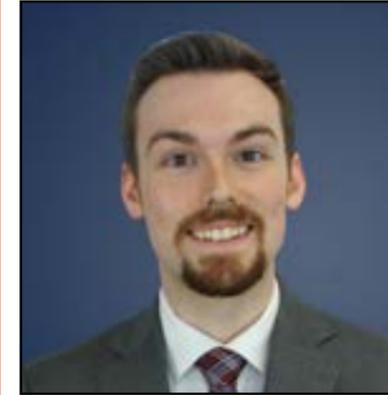
Would you rather have free unlimited espresso drinks or free cookies? Coffee, all day, forever.

What's your worst and best kitchen creation? My best was pumpkin fudge and the worst would be my gravy. I can never manage to make gravy work for me.

What would you do if you woke up and could read minds? I would probably be pretty shocked at what I heard initially but I would use the gift to help people communicate better.

SPOTLIGHT ON

Ian Coddington
Board member
of Longmeadow, MA



In your free time, would you rather play a game, watch a movie, or read? Why? Torn between board games and reading. I have a group of friends that I play board games with on a biweekly basis. It is mentally stimulating and brings me a lot of joy. I also frequent The Storrs Library in Longmeadow as I read as much as I can.

Which of your five senses is the strongest? Hearing. I can be dead asleep and hear my cat knock over a glass and be awake instantly.

If a genie were to grant you an infinite amount of one thing, what would it be? Time. Time is our most finite asset. To have more for spending it with families, pursuing passions, giving back, and learning would make everyone better off.

What is the best concert you've attended? Only attended one concert: Florida Georgia Line with Dan and Shay. It was excellent.

Continued from Page 1

at Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity build sites.

"The beauty of this book was that I could not not write it. I felt so strongly that the students would like to hear about the people who built their school," Erin said. "There is so much to learn from buildings, both new and old. I became fascinated with the idea of human hands creating a 'place'."

Erin brainstormed the idea while photographing the construction of the Head Start building. Erin then worked collaboratively with a graphic designer/artist, illustrator, and of course, Tyeka.

"It seems so odd that here was this local woman showing up each day in all kinds of rotten New England weather, helping to build this school, board by board," Erin said. "The kids here would never know her otherwise." Tyeka said she is pleased with the book and her character in it. "A role model is such a crucial part of life. An amazing role model can change the life path of a person. So, to be able to inspire and encourage kids to follow their dreams is something I don't take lightly and I'm very proud of it."

Creating the book, which included writing the story, working with her graphics and illustration team, and ensuring the intricacies – such as correctly formatting the copyright page – took three years. In December 2021, Erin independently published the book at a local printing company. Each student at Head Start received a copy. Erin said now she is researching grants to fund the publishing of more books so every child in Springfield can have access to one.

"I just love the fact she incorporated all the trades and she was very thorough explaining each and every one of the trades," said Tyeka, who emphasized her love for



Tyeka Robinson second from left helps build a walkway during Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity's Women Build event.

the book. "You know a lot of kids ride past construction sites and they're like, 'Wow, what are they doing?'"

Erin said she also received constructive criticism from her then 5-year-old daughter, Elizabeth. Erin showed the fifth version of the story to her young daughter. In the book, main character Tyeka wore a summer dress.

"Elizabeth was horrified," Erin said with an emphasis on horrified. "'Mom! She will be in trouble if she goes to school with no pants!'"

Erin said she went back through the story and had her illustrator Jill Kovalchik draw leggings on the title character.

Despite all the revisions, Erin said she knew she had done right by the story when she met a young girl about 3 years old following a rollout meeting at Head Start. Erin showed her the front cover and the girl's reaction was priceless.

"She assumed that Tyeka, the girl narrator on the cover, was her. Ironically, she looked exactly like her – hairstyle and all. Without a word, she looked at the girl, hugged the book to her chest, and began to walk away," Erin said.

"I was so moved. This little girl is exactly why I created the story."

"Who Built My Ziggy-Zaggy School" is available for purchase at [amzn.to/3LsKwAZ](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09L5KQZ8Z) for \$11.98.