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INSIDE THIS WEEK



COMMUNITY SPIRIT
Young autistic author inspires and entertains with imaginative debut book



SPORTUNLIMITED
Legendary Edmonton baseball broadcaster gets his due on the basketball court



PHOTO BY DARRYL DYCK

THERE'S SOMETHING FISHY ABOUT THIS: Tarrie O'Brien, left, and her husband Murray O'Brien examine fish tanks as the Aquarium Club of Edmonton and the Canadian Association of Aquarium Club hosted a show and convention at the Sands Hotel last weekend.

noteWORTHY

On Saturday and Sunday at the Telus World of Science, a variety of sports clubs and groups from around Edmonton will demonstrate their sports and illustrate how to get healthy and stay active for life. The interactive display will run from noon to 4 p.m. both days at 11211 142 St. Visit odyssey.com for more information.

Locals resigned to remand plans

Proposed centre in city's north needed to ease overcrowding, says designer

GEOFF DEMBICKI
EXAMINER STAFF

Edmonton's new remand centre could ease overcrowding and boost the security of correctional officers working there say the building's designers, though some of the city's northern residents have voiced concerns about its location.

Set to be completed in 2011, the \$620-million facility will be located just beneath the Young Offender Centre near 127 Street and 186 Avenue and could eventually hold 2,800 inmates. The extra space will allow Edmonton to deal effectively with its growing inmate population, says Jason Said, an architect with O'Neill O'Neill Procinsky Architects, the firm that designed the building. "When the old

[remand] centre opened in 1979 it was supposed to hold around 380 inmates," he says. "I think they hit 800 a week ago. It's way overcrowded." The new building will consist of a series of seven pods clustered around a main central building.

CONTINUED INSIDE

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Autism doesn't stop 11-year-old author

GEOFF DEMBICKI
EXAMINER STAFF

COMMUNITY SPIRIT



EDITOR'S NOTE: If you know of someone with community spirit, let us know about them. Phone editor Barry Hanson at 468-0326 or send an e-mail to newsroom@edmontonexaminer.com

Once done, the finished work greatly impressed Chantal Lynch, Alexandre's mom and also an author.

"When she saw what I had written she thought it would be good and we could turn it into a book," says Alexandre.

But getting the story published turned out to be a bit more work than writing it. Chantal and her son had to line up an editor, track down an illustrator and get hold of a reasonably cheap printer. All told, the first run of 1,000 books cost over \$3,000.

Though Chantal would like to get her money back, a certain amount of benevolence lies at the heart of the project — one dollar from each copy sold will be donated to the Edmonton Autism Society.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Alexandre Lynch poses with his former kindergarten teacher, Mme. Monique, and her two children during a recent autograph session at his former school, Père Lacombe.

Because he has Asberger's Syndrome, Alexandre has had frequent dealings with the group.

"It can make you disabled with things," he says, talking about his condition.

"For me, writing is very hard and reading and math are easy."

Chantal says her son also struggles with social skills because he finds it difficult to maintain conversations and can get frustrated or lose control of himself very easily. Nonetheless, she points out that people with Asberger's generally have high IQs and often show marked creativity and wild imaginations.

"In some regards (his condition) helped the writing process. Weird things are more normal for him than most kids," she says.

For the time being, Chantal and Alexandre will continue to promote the book in the hopes of selling out the first print run of 1,000 copies. Though he is not sure whether he will write another book, Chantal says she is already immensely proud of her son.

"Alex wants kids to have hope, to know that just because you're different it doesn't mean you can't do something."

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In most respects, Alexandre Lynch is every bit a normal kid. He's fond of his dog, loves to snowboard and shows a little shyness around adults. But such normalcy hides something remarkable.

The 11-year-old Alexandre has recently become one of Edmonton's youngest published authors — a feat obtained despite his daily struggle with Asberger's syndrome, a mild form of autism that can sometimes make school and socializing difficult.

My *Goldfish Ate My Cat*, a short children's tale about a fish who yearns to season and devour a feline, was officially released on April 19 at NAIT's annual Literacy and Learning Day.

Since then, the book has sold 80 copies, with some of those going to buyers from the U.S., New Zealand and Germany. In the process, the bilingual Alexandre has become a sort of minor celebrity, appearing on CBC's *Le Téléjournal* and Radio-Canada. "It's pretty cool," he says, a smile spreading across his face.

The book originally started as a school project last year when Alexandre was asked to write a story about something weird. Choosing to invert the traditional cat-fish relationship because it made him laugh, he completed the story in one sitting with the help of an assistant.

"When (my mom) saw what I had written she thought it would be good and we could turn it into a book."

Alexandre Lynch
AUTHOR, *MY GOLDFISH ATE MY CAT*

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