

The Social Scene

A squid's tale

► Book benefits aquarium

By **JULIE GUSTAFSON**
Lifestyles Editor

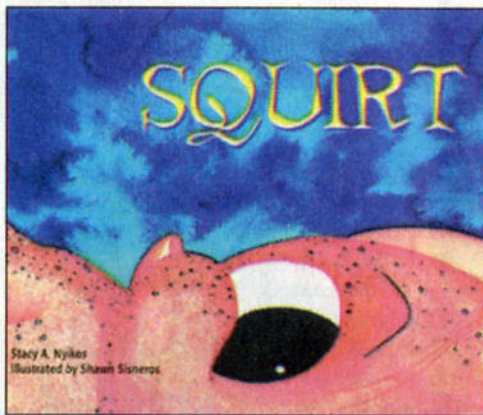
What happens when an award-winning academic writer becomes a mother? Naturally, she writes a children's book.

Stacy Nyikos has spent the last several years writing in academic journals about statistics, law and politics. When she noticed her then-4-year-old daughter preferred toys over books, she thought it would be great to write a book that would excite and entertain children as much as a toy.

"I hadn't really thought about children's literature, but I woke up one morning and I had an idea in my head," she said.

Nyikos, who holds a Ph.D. in politics from the University of Virginia, wanted the book to be interesting but have a message, too. Her daughter's own newly found obsession with television provided the inspiration.

"My daughter was going



A portion of the proceeds from the sale of "Squirt" benefits the Oklahoma Aquarium in Jenks.

through the 'all I want to do is watch TV' phase," Nyikos said. "In the book, the little squid watches so much TV he loses his imagination and the television runs away. I wanted to come up with something that would convey a message to my own children and this problem that I think most parents face."

With the help of his mother, Squirt works out his frustration and the book follows him as he

learns to use his imagination again.

The lively, rhyming text is accompanied by colorful undersea illustrations provided by local artist Shawn Sisneros.

The two met when Nyikos commissioned Sisneros for a piece to place in her home. She thought of him again when it was time to find an illustrator. Never one to turn down a challenge, he accepted her offer.

A graduate of the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, Sisneros

typically works in oils, but he chose watercolor and ink for the book.

"I thought it would not be as hard as fine art but it was harder for me actually," he said. "For one, I'm not the best storyteller."

As Squirt's mood changes, so does his color, so the book is filled with vibrant hues of blue, purple, red and green.

Part of the proceeds from the book will go to the Oklahoma Aquarium. A bevy of events are lined up to celebrate the book's June 4 release.

Nyikos' independent publish-



Illustrator Shawn Sisneros (left) and writer Stacy Nyikos with a copy of their new book "Squirt."

ing company, Stonehorse Publishing, held a drawing contest involving 15 local schools. The winning drawings will be on display at the aquarium.

A launch party at the aquarium June 4 will feature fun and educational activities for children, including book signings by Nyikos and Sisneros. In July, the aquarium will host Cephalopod Day in honor of Squirt. Children who attend will learn all about squids and vie for various prizes.

Adult fans of Squirt will have

fun at the Chardonnay and Calamari event in July. Guests will get a sneak peak at the original illustrations that will be available for auction next year at the aquarium's Mardi Gras celebration.

For more information about Squirt, visit www.stonehorsepublishing.com. The hardback book is \$15.95 and available at the aquarium gift shop, Steve's Sundry and Books, Barnes and Noble, Snow Goose, King's Kids and the Cat and the Fiddle.

www.tulsafrofrontpa

Social Calendar

3 Fri **6 p.m.** PFLAG is hosting a Family PRIDE Spaghetti Dinner to kick off Diver Celebration 2005 events dinner, entertainment and prizes. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. Fellowship Congregational Church, 2000 S. Street and Harvard Avenue. For more information visit www.pflagtulsa.org.

3 Fri **6 p.m.** Bishop High School holds its annual endowment dinner and presents a popular "Late Night Cat" at the Cain's Ballroom. Money raised provides scholarships for students who cannot afford to attend the school.

4 Sat **7 a.m.** Approximately 500 bike riders are expected at the Tulsa Tour de Tulsa. Choose from family fun run up to a 100-mile ride in and around Tulsa. Proceeds benefit the Community Health Foundation's program. For information or to pre-register call (918) 595-4402 or www.tourdetulsa.com.

4 Sat **8 a.m.** Neighbor along the line is holding a benefit garage sale at John Knox Presbyterian Church, 31 Street and Delaware. For information call (918) 584-1111.

4 Sat **9 a.m.-6p.m.** Neighbor for Neighbor is holding Neighbor 2005. Day of activities includes a Celebration of parade and a concert featuring DC Minner & Shelby and others. Festival is \$1 or a cash and concert tickets.

For Sale By Owner

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