

# The Scarsdale Inquirer

Founded in 1901

VOLUME 93, NUMBER 6

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2015

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION

## A children's guide to visiting the dentist

By VALERIE ABRAHAMS

For 20 years, Joanne Roos has helped thousands of very young children feel comfortable and assured for their first trips to the dentist, settling youngsters into happy routines of brushing, flossing and healthy snacking as a dental hygienist at Main Street Pediatric Dentistry in Tuckahoe.

When Roos, a Quaker Ridge mother of two, realized going to the dentist can be a worrisome experience for

young children, she initiated an outreach program. For 10 years she has been visiting local children's libraries and preschools—including Scarsdale Friends Preschool, St. James the Less Nursery School and the Scarsdale Congregational Church—to educate children on what to expect and how to take care of their teeth.

Just in time for Children's Dental Health Month, Roos has turned her years of experience into a children's book for ages 2 to 6 titled "Who Visits Me From A to Z: An Alphanumeric Adventure to the Dentist." The book is whimsically illustrated with an alphabet of animal characters to help make those early visits enjoyable.

Roos will debut her book at the Scarsdale Library Thursday, Feb. 26, at 4 p.m. The event will feature story hour and drawings of animals for each child in the audience, a raffle, activity sheets, refreshments and prizes.

"The book is a labor of love and a cul-



ALAN RADOM PHOTO

Joanne Roos and her book with cover by Maggie O'Keefe.



mination of my outreach work," Roos said.

While doing that outreach, Roos realized something was needed to make her presentations more entertaining. "I started adding words and noises, and I thought I could organize and write it, but I needed a book template and illustrations."

For help with the template, Roos reached out to libraries and found Theresa Chang at Eastchester Library who responded with an immediate "yes."

"What are librarians for?" Chang said.

Finding an illustrator proved more difficult. "They all wanted a lot of money," Roos said. Perhaps a student artist would

help with the book project, she thought. Last May she contacted the high school and art department chairman Dr. Nadine Gordon introduced Roos to Maggie O'Keefe, the only junior in Gordon's AT visual arts class, which was not scheduled to meet in May and June when the seniors would be busy with senior options. O'Keefe jumped at the chance to work on Roos's project.

The pair partnered through the spring and summer with Roos drawing stick figures to outline her ideas and O'Keefe adding colors and textures.

O'Keefe created the front and back cover art and illustrated each of the book's 40 pages. The two also dreamed up templates for other uses of the book's illustrations such as bookmarks and posters about going to the dentist.

O'Keefe's aunt, Mary O'Keefe Young — illustrator of the "New Adventures of Curious George" and "Biscuit" books — inspired the artist as a child and served as an advisor for her on this project, her first book illustration endeavor. "It was a great learning experience," O'Keefe said. "I work in realism, closer to fine arts, mostly paintings and large pieces. I always wanted to simplify and minimize my work."

Roos said the whole process took about a year to complete: "so fast, and so slow at the same time." She completed the project through CreateSpace, an Amazon subsidy that helps people independently publish and distribute books.

Available now on Amazon.com, Roos hopes the book will serve as a resource for libraries, pediatric dentists and nursery schools as well as a conversation starter between parents and children.

And finally, at last, Roos has just the right material to fill her outreach program with maximum fun.