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Local mother uses book to help keep children safe

BY IVY FARGUHESON • JOURNAL STAFF • MAY 30, 2008

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Hilary Bilbrey thinks everyone has a purpose in life and she became aware of hers in 2003.

ADVERTISEMENT The Stevens Point woman's 18-month-old son was badly burned in April of that year, spurring Bilbrey to use her creativity to increase children's safety.

She wrote "Breckler Bunny Learns to be Careful!" The children's book teaches youngsters tips in fire and burn safety -- a work inspired by her family's experiences.

"It is your personal responsibility to share what you have learned, just to be a better part of the community," Bilbrey said. "You may not like the story you've been given, but there is a gift in that story. The challenge is finding that gift and being able to give it."

This week, the author with the help of Sentry Insurance and local fire departments, gave 5,000 copies of the book to students across Portage County. A checklist and calendar were added at the end of each book thanks to the Wisconsin Alliance for Fire Safety.

Bilbrey read her book and answered questions for students at Sacred Heart Elementary School in Polonia and Madison School in Stevens Point this week.

Local teachers said the students wouldn't forget the day an author came and read from her book.

"Anytime anybody can reinforce what we try to do in the classroom, it just adds to their knowledge," said Mary Stutzman, a third- and fourth-grade teacher at Sacred Heart.

Bilbrey also hoped the students were inspired by her story and could see that they, too, can make a positive difference in their communities with the help of people around them.

"I'm in disbelief that (Sentry) took one mom's story and thought it would be important enough to give to 5,000 kids," she said. "The number of lives that will be, hopefully, touched by that just astounds me."

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Doug Wojcik/Stevens Point Journal

Students at Sacred Heart Elementary School in Polonia listen Thursday afternoon as Hilary Bilbrey reads "Breckler Bunny Learns to be Careful!"

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