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JANUARY 16, 2013 AT 1:00 AM

Marney Rich Keenan

Whitmore Lake author on crusade for kids

Writer's book has 'powerful' message on dealing with an alcoholic parent

MARNEY RICH KEENAN 8 COMMENTS





Jody Lamb says that at her book launch and signing in November 2012, she was so happy that "any fears about speaking about this subject and taking on this problem slipped away." (Jody Lamb)

After two years spent writing her first novel for tween readers, Jody Lamb flew to Los Angeles to shop her manuscript at the annual conference of the Society of Children's Books Writers and Illustrators.

"I sat down with one of the editors from a top publishing house in New York City, so excited to sell my book," Lamb remembers. "And I was immediately shot down."

Lamb was told that if she wanted to publish anything, "I needed to write about vampires and wizards." She promptly returned to her hotel room, whereupon she collapsed on her bed and had a good long cry.

Even so, Lamb, 30, did not give up. Motivated by a desire to help young people growing up with the burden of an alcoholic parent, she returned to her home in Whitmore Lake and forged ahead with her plans to publish.

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More Marney Rich Keenan

"I come from a very large, lovable, wonderful family in which alcoholism is a major problem," Lamb says. "Growing up nobody talked about it. For the longest time, I suffered in silence. I thought I was alone."

"Easter Ann Peters' Operation Cool" (Scribe, 2012) is about a 12-year-old, socially awkward, straight-A student whose plan — "Operation Cool" — is to reinvent herself.

When a nice, new girl in town becomes her longed-for best friend, Easter begins to blossom. But at home, Easter's mother's behavior threatens to derail her progress. She is drinking nonstop, hiding bottles and is always in bed, "not feeling well." Easter works double-time to cover for her mother, cooking and cleaning, trying to keep up appearances.

Jerry Moe, Betty Ford Center's National Director of Children's Programs in Rancho Mirage, Calif., says the book is "a very powerful read" and "provides a message of hope."

Indeed, there are plenty of how-to recovery books from groups like Alateen and Adult Children of Alcoholics, but Lamb sensitively handles the complicated dynamic that is the alcoholic mother.

"That was one thing I really wanted to convey," Lamb says. "I did not want to vilify Easter's mother. That portrayal of the alcoholic always bothered me because I know there are so many wonderful loving parents who become different people when they are battling this disease."

A 2011 report from the National Institute on Alcohol and Alcoholism said an increasing number of women drink in a way that "threatens their health, safety and general well-being." It is also estimated that 1 in 4 children grow up today with an alcoholic parent.

In addition, there is lots of anecdotal evidence that cultural trends tend to minimize the risks of moms imbibing. To wit: The Facebook pages "OMG I need a glass of wine or I'm gonna sell my kids" and "Moms who need Wine" are liked by 115,000 and 600,000 followers respectively. Also, a new line of red and white wines, "MommyJuice Wines" has an ad campaign that mimics McDonald's: "Moms everywhere deserve a break. So tuck your kids into bed, sit down and have a glass of MommyJuice — because you deserve it!"

In February of 2012, Lamb met with Jennifer Baum, a Royal Oak author and editor who recently founded Scribe Publishing, a small, independent, trade publishing company in Royal Oak. Baum says that even though she hadn't intended to publish for the 8-12 age market, "I loved the voice the story was written in and it was clear how passionate Jody was about helping kids cope with alcoholism."

Whitmore Lake author on crusade for kids

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Lamb says her family's reaction has been mixed.

"I am not Easter, but I have several aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins who battle this disease," she says. "Some have been successful and some have had brushes with death. So, some were extremely supportive and proud, and others have felt very uncomfortable with this family secret being exposed. And that's a big part of the problem. Nobody can help if it's kept a secret."

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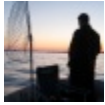
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Posting as Jody Lamb (Not you?)

Comment**David Doyle** · Oakland University

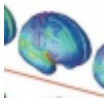
This book belongs in every middle school library and should be brought to the attention of every school counselor. The author has done a great job of dealing with a very difficult subject.

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**Steve Linting** · Oakland University

Inspirational! That's all I can say. You are going to help so many people and touch so many lives in a positive way. So proud to say you're my cousin.

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**BreakingTheCycles.com**

This is such an important group to target – helping children is one of the best ways we can break the cycles AND insure they enjoy their lives in spite of a loved one's alcoholism.

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**Donna Halinski Hondorp** · Michigan State University

Looks like this book would spark hope for kids dealing with alcoholic loved ones.

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**Carol DeFilippi**

There are two wonderful stories here. There is the inspiring story of young Easter Ann and how she deals not only with the "normal" trials of adolescence but also her sad secret. And then there is the author's own story – one of determination and hope and her own inspirational path to seeing her dream to fruition. Congratulations, Ms. Lamb, on both!

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**Jeff Pozy** · Top Commenter · Ann Arbor, Michigan

Shouldn't it be "Peters's"? The rules for singular or plural possessive and apostrophes do not include an exception for words that happen to end in an "s". (Yes, PBS's Rick Steves makes the same error.)

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**Susan Laing** · Albion

"Although names ending in s or an s sound are not required to have the second s added in possessive form, it is preferred." It's like the Oxford Comma – both are correct.

<http://www.grammarbook.com/punctuation/apostro.asp>

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**Trish Guarino** · Oakland University

You have to love and respect the people who don't give up. Lamb has an important message---kudos to her for fighting for what she believes in! The whole concept of "mommy juice" is horrific!

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**Tom Leitch** · Top Commenter · MC3 in Waren, MI.

You go girl!



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Howard ...

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