

Celebrate With Shmulik

A local author helps kids commemorate Yom HaAtzmaut.

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Contributing Writer



Lisa Rose

A rose by any other name might smell as sweet — but some names might not be as easy to pronounce and remember, especially for children.

That's what a Farmington Hills author thought about as her children's books gained the attention of publishers. She decided to use her first and middle names, Lisa Rose, as pen name while restricting her maiden name (Granitz) and married name (Chottiner) for personal purposes apart from public attention.

"My pen name is the way I'm known on my author website [lisarosewrites.me] and on social media," says the author, 42, who is about to launch *Shmulik Paints the Town* (Kar-Ben Publishing; \$7.99), her first picture book in print.

The book, to be introduced on the afternoon of Sunday, March 13, at the Jewish Community Center, celebrates Israeli Independence Day (Yom HaAtzmaut, which falls this year on May 11), which commemorates the Israeli

benches to remain at Shalom Street, where the launch will be held and where kids are encouraged to participate in special activities.

"In the book, a dog gets to paint; at our launch party, there will be the chance for kids to experience painting," she says.

Rose has written two ebooks, *Oh No, The Tooth Fairy Broke Her Wing!* and *Oh No! The Easter Bunny Is Allergic to Eggs!*, both published on MeeGenius, a division of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

"I try to think of funny things and write quirky," explains Rose, who has taught early childhood education in Pontiac and Highland Park, where her students often were homeless.

"I worked on the new book for years before it became a Jewish story. I found out that there wasn't a story about Israeli Independence Day, and I decided there needed to be. It was a holiday that I didn't even know much about, and it fit well into what I was doing."

The link to the Jewish holiday happened after suggestions during meetings with local members of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. The manuscript had been dormant a while until she was prompted to tie it to the calendar.

Rose, interested in writing since second grade and while growing up in West Bloomfield, fulfilled another and more practical interest by becoming a teacher. She earned her bachelor's degree in education at the University of Michigan and her master's in reading at Oakland University.

The author and husband, Jeff, an engineer, have an 8-year-old daughter, Victoria Rose. As a family, they participate in the Friendship Circle, supplementing Victoria's participation in activities at the Jewish Community Center.

"I really feel good about knowing what will appeal to

children," says Rose, who had her bat mitzvah at Temple Kol Ami and looks forward to celebrating the 30th anniversary of that event.

"The picture-book ages are the ages I taught. My older work has African-American characters in an urban setting, so I am very diverse in my writing."

The original idea for the *Shmulik* book came about from a cousin who develops paintings around paw prints submitted by pet owners. The idea is to provide important artistic keepsakes.

"The moral of the *Shmulik* story is perseverance," Rose says.

Barely a month after the book was published, Rose has been honored by being chosen as a PJ Library author. A program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, PJ Library every month sends free Jewish children's books to families across the world with the goal of sharing Jewish stories that can help families talk together about values, traditions and culture.

PJ Library is made possible through partnerships with philanthropists and Jewish organizations to serve families with youngsters from 6 months to 8 years old, bringing Judaism into their lives regardless of Jewish background, knowledge or observance.

"This is the first time there has been a PJ Library author from the Detroit area," Rose says. "It's a celebration for the community that someone who has been here for more than 40 years wrote a book being shared with the community."

Rose has lots more to share as she develops other works, including a middle-grades novel with a graffiti artist and a digital media project with the producer of Eminem's *Eight Mile*.

"I like to swim, practice yoga and eat ice cream," Rose says. "I love teaching, but I stopped to live my dream." *



On Monday, the mayor visited Shmulik the painter.
"Soon it will be Yom HaAtzmaut, and we will celebrate Israel's independence. Can you paint on a mural on the wall and decorate the park around it?"
"Certainly!" said Shmulik.

details

Lisa Rose will launch her new book 1-3 p.m. Sunday, March 13, at Shalom Street in the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. lisarosewrites.me.

Declaration of Independence in 1948.

The story introduces a procrastinating painter who is asked to decorate for the holiday, celebrated with family picnics and barbecues. He is accompanied by his dog, who ultimately takes charge of the requested responsibilities.

After Rose reads to the group, children will get into the creative spirit by painting