

# First an Artist, Now a Children's Book Author

Cheektowaga resident Robert Kneiting, 57, is all about creativity! He enjoys creating abstract artwork and has sold his paintings at Starlight Studio and Art Gallery in Buffalo, NY. He recently ventured into another creative outlet – writing and illustrating children's books. Both books, geared towards children ages three to eight, are sold on Amazon. The stories, titled *The Adventures of Bixie and Myron* and *The Adventures of Bixie and Myron Happy Birthday*, are an important part of Robert's mission to help people with developmental disabilities realize their potential. The books show that a person on the Autism spectrum can accomplish their dreams with hard work and perseverance. Robert receives support from People Inc. Self-Directed Services, a person-centered program that encourages people with disabilities to manage a plan based around their own needs and interests. To help write the children's series, Robert receives guidance from Donald Jackson, his life coach and Self-Directed assistant for People Inc. Donald, a comic book illustrator, is a great partner for Robert and the two are always inspiring each other's creativity. To learn more about Robert, here is a Q&A:

## Tell us more about yourself.

About 15 years ago, I was tested and diagnosed with Asperger's (now Autism Spectrum Disorder). Despite my disabilities, I have been able to make a good life for myself. I have a job at Cantalician Center for Learning as a light manufacturer through their Community Prevocational Services. I also receive Self-Directed Services from People Inc. I live on my own and really like my apartment. I love to cook and bake. I enjoy listening to live music and going to art museums. My interests include creating art, being active in my community, collecting things to make my apartment more to my taste and cuddling with my cat Bixie.

## What motivates you to be creative?

I want to spread awareness about people with developmental disabilities, so that the world understands that we can also live normal lives. We can live by ourselves and we can be active in our communities. I would like to help other people with disabilities by inspiring them through my art and books. A percentage of the proceeds from my art sales and books will go to programs that help children and adults with developmental disabilities.

## Why did you start writing children's books?

In 2020, I started writing and illustrating my own children's books. I thought it would be another way to donate to organizations that support people with disabilities. I'm writing these books so parents and



teachers can read them to children and help them understand about the lives of people with disabilities. My mission is to spread awareness of people with disabilities, so that others don't shy away from them. I also want to encourage people with disabilities to accomplish their goals.

## What is the "Adventures of Bixie and Myron" book series about?

The books are about a unique friendship between a cat named Bixie – who happens to be my cat – and a mouse named Myron, which is based on myself. There's lots of adventures and comedy among friends and animals!

I'm also creating a Bixie adventure book for all the major holidays. Soon *Bixie's First Christmas* will be available on Amazon and I'm now writing and illustrating *Bixie and Myron's Easter Adventure*. I'm happy to share that sales are doing well and there is a lot of interest in supporting people with disabilities through my books.

## What are your future goals for the book series?

The books are currently sold on Amazon and I'd like to get them at local book stores, too. I'm also writing additional books for the series. I was recently invited to do a presentation with my boss from the Cantalician Center at West Seneca Senior High School. I would like to eventually do more presentations at schools throughout Western New York to tell my story, promote an understanding of people with disabilities through my books and bring the characters to life in classrooms. I want to help kids not be afraid of people with disabilities.

I also just want to thank all the people who have supported me. It means so much!