

Book on bullying published by Appleton woman

Features dog who was different

By Cheryl Anderson
Post-Crescent Media

APPLETON — Verbal torment, ridicule and teasing were an everyday occurrence in elementary school for Heather Whittaker, who protected herself in junior high by bullying others. It was not something she was proud of, and still is a sort of anxiety for the 41-year-old Appleton woman.



A Different Little Doggy

written by Heather Whittaker
illustrated by Scott Alberts

Now an author and motivational speaker, Whittaker is spreading the message of toler-

ance and acceptance in hopes of curbing bullying behavior in other children in her new book, "A Different Little Doggy."

"It's really a story that teaches children that it's OK that you're different," Whittaker said.

It's a good story to share with children during National Bullying Prevention Month, which runs through October. A recent study by the Family and Work Institute reports one-third of youth are bullied at least once a month. Children who are

bullied often are singled out because of a perceived difference between them and others.

"A Different Little Doggy" is geared for ages 3 to 8, and is the true story of Whittaker's dog, Taz, a Miniature Pinscher with a host of health problems that eventually included losing her eyesight. Yet Taz maintained her spirit and zest for life for 15 years before passing away about two years ago.

"It points out all the ways Taz was different and why each of those things is a benefit or a

good thing that she was proud of," said Whittaker who collaborated on the book with Scott Alberts, an Appleton-based illustrator who has gained national recognition.

Whittaker had written two prior books, also with Taz as her muse. Her first, "The Tazie Effect," offered 10 leadership principles based on the life of a dog.

The second book, "Everything You Need to Know About Life Can be Learned from a Dog," offers 50 life lessons such as taking time to enjoy a car ride.

When Alberts asked if Whittaker was willing to partner with him on a children's book, "I said lets try it, and I think that's where I found my niche."

With Alberts' help, Whittaker hopes to pen similar books based on things that create anxiety in a child's life.

"My long-term vision is to term it into a series of books that helps kids and keeps Taz alive in all those books," she said.

Cheryl Anderson: 920-993-1000, ext. 249,
canderson@postcrescent.com;
on Twitter @chermanderson