

NEW BRAUNFELS Herald-Zeitung

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BeakSpeak sparks social, language skills Former SV teacher, CL resident publishes first children's book

By Lindsey Carnett
The Herald-Zeitung

A retired Smithson Valley High School Teacher who is now a Canyon Lake resident has accomplished a life's goal and published her first children's book.

The book, "BeakSpeak" is both a fun fable for kids and a language workbook helping teach children speaking and writing skills, as well as social skills.

The author, Peggy

Marceaux, came up with the idea for the book after retiring from teaching in 2002. Marceaux had spent 15 years teaching at Smithson Valley High School to complete her 32-year teaching career.

"It's a fable, which is a book with a moral," Marceaux said.

The book features seven young chickens and their teacher, with each young chicken representing a different language problem.

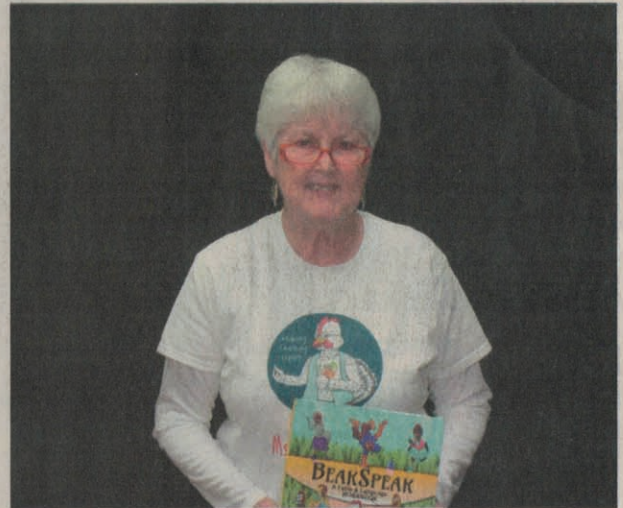
"There's All the Same Jayne, who uses stereotypes to speak;

Nothing New Sue uses clichés; Fill the Space Chase uses filler words like 'like,' and 'uh,' — so they each have a related name and a problem," Marceaux said.

The book serves to teach children about chickens and related terminology while also teaching them to be more specific when speaking and breaking up social stereotypes.

"A big problem I noticed

See **BOOK**, page 12



Author Peggy Marceaux holds a copy of her book, "BeakSpeak." Photo courtesy

Abby 15 Classifieds 13-15 Comics 9 Crosswords 9 Opinion 4 Obituaries 6 Stammtisch 2 Sports 10 and 11 TV 6



Weather, 13



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BOOK

Continued from page 1

when I was a teacher was getting kids to explain what they mean and why they're thinking what they are," Marceaux said. "I used chickens rather than humans, because it helps break up social stereotypes based on skin color or background."

A big message Marceaux said she hopes children take away from the book is not to judge others by how they look, act or talk.

"At the end of the book are questions which ask about the text, so that's something pretty unique about the book,"

Marceaux said.

This helps to reinforce the language and social skills presented in the book, Marceaux said.

"There are suggested answers at the back of the book for teachers and parents to use," she said.

The fable carries an anti-bullying message, and teaches children how to talk to and overcome a bully, Marceaux said.

"So kindness wins in the end," Marceaux said.

Another reason Marceaux used chickens is she raised chickens for 30 years.

"I wrote the text back when I was living on a farm in Seguin in 1990 and meant to have my sister Debbie illustrate it,"

Marceaux said.

Unfortunately Debbie's family came under extenuating circumstances, which caused the project to be put on hold. Marceaux resumed the book in 2017, after a happenstance meeting.

"I was having computer problems, so I hired a gentleman to come fix it for me and we got to talking, and he said he knew a woman who does books," she said. "So I gave it to her and she was impressed."

The woman, Kathleen Shields, is owner of Erin Go Books. The women found an illustrator for the book and were able to get it published earlier this spring.

"I've been trying to get it out to kids now, so I've been going to different feed stores and I've gone to Comal Independent School District to try to get it sold and added to the curriculum."

During her time working at Smithson Valley High School, Marceaux chaired the English department, sponsored and judged UIL events, and helped further and align Comal ISD English curriculum throughout the grades.

Seeing the book come to fruition has been a dream come true, Marceaux said.

"Just getting it published, that's been my favorite part," she said.