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Jeremy Jackrabbit inspires kindergarteners

By Karen Davis Barr

THIS MONTH, a Phoenix couple will launch their fourth book in a series created to encourage literacy and environmental values in Arizona school children.

Jeremy Jackrabbit Saves Every Drop will debut during a public kickoff event on Saturday, April 18 at the Arizona Science Center. Over the following weeks, 55,000 free copies will be distributed to kindergarten students attending traditional public schools in Maricopa County and the Tucson Unified and Vail school districts in southern Arizona.

The series, co-authored by Rodney and Sasha Glassman, centers on its main character's growing awareness of natural resources and the importance of leveraging, preserving and protecting them.

The Glassmans, both attorneys, have long histories of community involvement and service.

Rodney Glassman is an Eagle Scout who earned master's degrees in business and public administration and a doctorate in arid land resource sciences before going to law school. He worked as a legislative aide for Congressman Raul Grijalva, served on the Tucson City Council, worked toward sustainability-related community partnerships for Waste Management, Inc., served as interim town manager for the town of Cave Creek and was a Democratic nominee in the 2010 U.S. Senate race against Sen. John McCain.

He currently practices with Ryley Carlock & Applewhite in Phoenix, where he focuses on relationship and policy development with corporate, government and nonprofit clients throughout Arizona and the Southwest. He is also a captain in the Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps Reserves of the U.S. Air Force.

Sasha Glassman, who holds an MBA and a master's degree in Latin American studies,

serves as corporate counsel for a Valley-based electronics manufacturing company. She is a member of the governing board for the Madison Elementary School District and has volunteered at her neighborhood school and with Lawyers for Literacy.

The Glassmans have two daughters: Rose, 4, and Ruth, 2.

The idea for *Jeremy Jackrabbit* began nearly five years ago in Tucson, where the Glassmans were then living. The couple started talking about creating a book for children that

reflected their shared passions for literacy and environmental stewardship.

They were familiar with the work of Brad Lancaster, who runs a Tucson-based consulting, design and education business focused on sustainable approaches to landscape design and living. Lancaster has authored three volumes of "how to" books on harvesting rainwater. The Glassmans decided to focus on that concept in their first book.

"The writing is interesting—that's always the challenge because you want to write



Rodney and Sasha Glassman, of Phoenix.

COURTESY OF THE GLASSMANS

something good," Rodney Glassman says.

They worked with Pima County Public Library to host an illustration contest so that artwork from local students would tell the visual version of their story. The first book, *Jeremy Jackrabbit Harvests the Rain*, was published in 2010.

They raised \$35,000, which allowed them to distribute a free copy of that first book to 15,000 kindergarten students in Pima County.

After their move to Phoenix, the idea for a second book began to grow. Glassman recalls a breakfast meeting with Phoenix City Councilman Michael Nowakowski, who is also vice president of the communications fund for Radio Campesina, a nine-station network of nonprofit, educational-format Spanish-language radio stations.

As Glassman remembers it, "He said, 'You should write another book, it should be available in Spanish and it should have a recycling guide.'"

Glassman threw some copies of the first *Jeremy Jackrabbit* book in the trunk of his car and pulled them out "anytime I was talking to anyone remotely related to opening a door for us," he says.

His goal was to raise \$100,000—in \$10,000 increments—so that every kindergarten student in Maricopa County would get a free copy of the second book, *Jeremy Jackrabbit Recycles the Can*, published in 2012. The third book, *Jeremy Jackrabbit Captures the Sun*, came out in 2014.

ASU President Michael Crow has written forwards for three of the books, including the new one. Rick Shangraw, CEO of ASU Foundation for A New American University, set up the donor-designated fund that acts as a fiduciary for money the Glassmans raise.

The couple is most proud of the fact that 100 percent of the money raised goes to printing and binding books, Glassman says. "Everyone involved is a volunteer."

When *Jeremy Jackrabbit Saves Every Drop* is distributed, each batch of 25 books will include "hands-on lesson plans [for teachers] that are aligned to Common Core Standards and incorporate characters of the book," Glassman says.

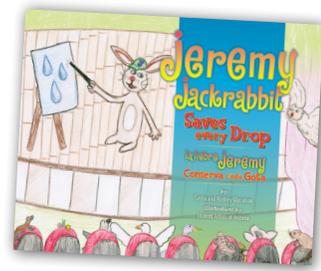
Books also are available for sale, with all proceeds benefiting children's programming at the Phoenix Public Library. Books and lesson plans are available at jeremyjackrabbit.com.

Karen Davis Barr is the founder, publisher and editor of *RAISING ARIZONA KIDS* magazine.

Book launch event

Saturday, April 18 • 9:30am
IMAX Theater at the Arizona Science Center

Readings, book signings by student artists and displays of owls and other birds from Wild at Heart Raptor Sanctuary. Free admission to the launch event; regular rates apply for Arizona Science Center admission.



RAISING ARIZONA KIDS
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