

Jacksonville from A to Z ...A good place to grow ... A good place to be!

by Susan D. Brendenbarg

At ages 10 and 7, Jamie and Peyton Surface of Ortega have an excellent understanding of the English language ... from A to Z. In fact, these enterprising young brothers have actually written a book using the alphabet to describe their favorite things about their hometown of Jacksonville, Florida.

What began about three years ago as a family game that challenged the boys to match familiar places, faces and historical facts with letters of the alphabet has evolved into a winning lesson on teamwork, family and community involvement and philanthropy.

"At first, the boys and I turned our *Jacksonville from A to Z* game into a little book just for family," said their mother, Heather Surface, "and it grew from there." Grew, indeed, with the original A to Z rhymes of the boys and their mother being

embellished by colorful illustrations done by patients at Wolfson Children's Hospital and Nemours Children's Clinic, the artwork facilitated through Art with a Heart for Children, a non-profit organization that uses art as a tool for the physical, emotional and spiritual healing.

Each imaginative illustration in the 32-page book depicts a Jacksonville landmark or characteristic and includes the patient's first name and age (from 4 to 20). With a spectacular cover design by talented local designer Jenny Ross Clarke, and a challenging quiz at the end of the book, *Jacksonville from A to Z* is a delightful and educational glimpse of our town.

"I learned a lot about how much there is to do in Jacksonville," said Jamie Surface. "When people are bored or complain there's nothing to do, they should just read our book and learn about all the cool things we have here." Both Jamie and Peyton said they



discovered that the long process of writing and publishing a book teaches one to "never give up," each of them displaying a selfless compassion and concern for others that is rare in their age group.

"When we decided to publish the book to raise funds for Art with a Heart for Children and other local charities, we were blessed by generous support from Dr. Lewis Obi and his wife, Myra Bairstow, as well as Leigh Fogle at Fogle Fine Art & Accessories," said Heather Surface. "Thanks to being involved in this true community project, *Jacksonville from A to Z* has turned into a special book that has already become a wonderful learning experience for many area children, including mine."

For many of the young illustrators, patients guided by the dedicated staff of Art with a Heart for Children, the book was a healing experience as well. Six year old Christopher, for example, illustrated the letter "D" for Downtown with the help of

his mother and became so engrossed in the project that he skipped his pain medication. Sebah, 17, didn't stop at one letter, but illustrated "A" for Art, music and dance, "O" for Ocean and "P" for Ports. And the letter "C" for Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens will always serve as a legacy for Jodi-Ann, because it was the last work she created in her short young life. For more information on Art with a Heart for Children, visit www.artwithaheart.info.

Jacksonville from A to Z is available locally at a variety of different venues (Cowford Traders in Avondale, Shore Things at the Beach, Fogle Gallery in St. Nicholas, the Jacksonville International Airport, and more) and can also be purchased by visiting the website: www.jacksonvillefromatoz.com. The books will also be sold at the 2008 Art & Antiques Show to benefit Wolfson Children's Hospital from December 3 through 6 at the Prime Osborne.

*Share Holiday Memories by
setting the scenes of Tradition*

* Wee Forrest Folk * Old World Christmas * G Debekht Russian Santas
 * Mark Roberts * Expressions from the Heart * Department 56
 * Christopher Radko * Byers' Choice Carolers * NeQwa Art

Gifts for EVERY Occasion.

Laura's

GIFTS, DECOR & MORE...
 1179 South Edgewood Avenue * 388-3889
 Extended Holiday Hours: Monday-Friday 10am-7pm, Saturdays 12-3:00pm
www.laurasgiftsandmore.com