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Local author publishes children's books

BY JILLIAN FELLOWS
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After years of keeping his stories bottled up, Leland Gamson has recently published five new children's books that detail everything from biblical stories to interactions between animals and their owners.

Gamson's books are available at Tree of Life, on amazon.com and at both the Marion Public Library and LaFontaine Public Library.

"About 30 years ago, I was writing part time for the Wesleyan Church and their Sunday school publication when they were headquartered here," Gamson said. "It was satisfying to have an outlet for my creativity but there was still something in me where I wanted a more permanent work than just a children's Sunday school publication. Books are forever."

After retiring from the Marion VA, Gamson said he wanted to focus on his writing.

"The stories are inside me anyway," he said. "One of the incentives for me to retire when I left after 35 years at the VA was to get serious about getting my stories in book form. When one is a writer or an artist, your window of opportunity is certainly a lot broader than an athlete's but it's not indefinite. I didn't want to be in my 90s living at Heritage Pointe in Warren with shoulda, coulda, woulda."

All five books were released together this year.

"We wanted to have five together because they promote each other," Gamson said. "They are not a series. There is no direct connection between these five books but I think they carry kind of the same spirit of the author."

The books include "Samson at the Olympics," "Lokael: The Donkey Who Carried Jesus," "If Your Dog Were a Human,"

"Why Can't Dogs Talk?" and "Where is Grandpa?"

"Three of them are illustrated by IWU graduates. One is by a local artist, Karen Welsh," Gamson said. "Two of them were written years ago. I was sending them to different Christian publishers because 'Samson at the Olympics' and 'Lokael: The Donkey Who Carried Jesus' are definitely for a Christian children's market."

Tylanna Jones, head of children's/youth services at the Marion Public Library, said there is a process involved when looking at local publications and "when we feel an author's work would complement our collection," they purchase it.

"I love that his work features a local illustrator and illustrations from IWU students," Jones said.

Gamson said the reaction to his books has been positive thus far and that he is looking forward to doing a reading in September.

"In my biased opinion, they should be classics, especially 'Lokael: The Donkey Who Carried Jesus' and 'Samson at the Olympics,'" he said. "Other



CHILDREN'S AUTHOR: Children's author Leland P. Gamson talks about his books Wednesday.

BOOKS: Books by Gamson include Lokael: The Donkey Who Carried Jesus, Samson at the Olympics, and Why Can't Dogs Talk?



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people have written stories of the donkey that Jesus rode through Jerusalem but in 'Lokael: The Donkey Who Carried Jesus,' I named him. Lokael is Hebrew for 'One who carries the Lord.'"

Gamson's wife, Bonnie Lou, added that she thinks his books are "wonderful."

"I think this is wonderful because we need new, good books out for kids," she said. "Kids need to learn how to read, so I think this will be good."

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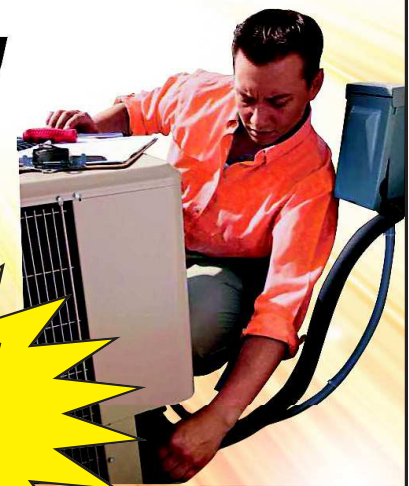
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