

AROUND TOWN

Author trades vitamin sales for brain food

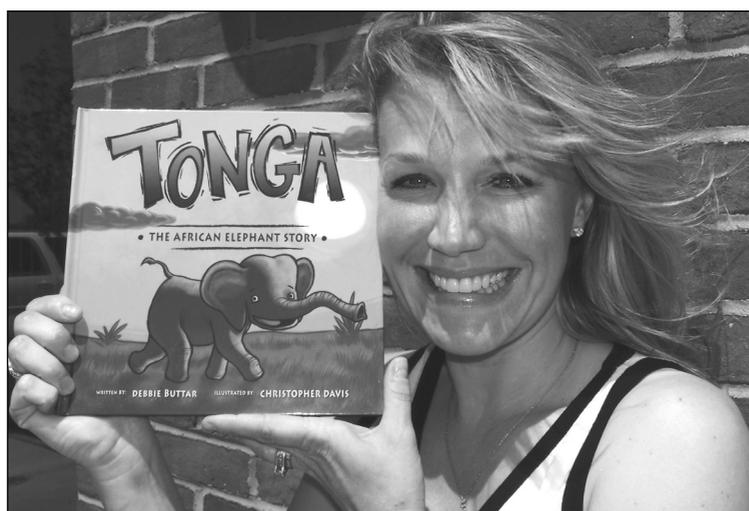
When Huntersville author Debbie Buttar left a lucrative job in nutritional sales two years ago, it wasn't so she could write a book, but rather so she could care for her son.

Yet, thanks to a few ordinary — and not so ordinary — events the past few months, Buttar's role as stay-at-home mom to three-year-old Rahan and stepchildren Abie (9) and Sara (15) has blossomed into that of children's book author and publisher.

Buttar's first book — *Tonga, The African Elephant Story* — was printed in March and is one of several children's books she plans to offer through www.ChildrensStoriesThatTeach.com. Inspired by an elephant sanctuary in Tennessee, "Tonga" began as a verbal tale Buttar told her children when they requested "a new" bedtime story.

Drawing on her love for animals and knowledge of several non-profit animal sanctuaries she supports financially, Buttar told a tale about African elephants that think they're home in Africa, only to discover they live on a sanctuary in Tennessee, a place that feels like "home" just the same.

After telling and retelling the story, Buttar decided to "see it on paper." She then e-mailed it to a friend in Pittsburgh whose connections to



ANN FLETCHER

Debbie Buttar hopes to raise awareness for animal sanctuaries with her children's book *Tonga, The African Elephant Story*.

the print advertising industry resulted in an unusual birthday gift for Buttar: An illustration of *Tonga, Kora and Zahara* — the elephants in her story — created by graphic artist Christopher Davis.

Once Buttar saw the illustration, she "fell in love with *Tonga, Kora and Zahara*" and thought, "I have to finish this book!" She self-published it to keep costs down and plans to publish more books for children of different ages. (*Tonga* is written for kids ages

two to six, but her next book, now under development, is an animal sounds book geared toward children ages one to three called *Llama Sounds*.)

The events connecting this Huntersville mom to a career in children's book publishing can be traced to an ordinary day in the life of Buttar and infant son, Rahan. Rahan was toddling around their Huntersville home while Buttar, who'd taken a brief, six-week maternity leave and was back at work selling pharma-

ceutical strength vitamins to medical professionals, was on a sales phone call. Rahan stumbled, as new toddlers do, and bumped his head.

It wasn't a serious injury, but Buttar, who scrambled between completing the call and attending to her son, made a split-second yet lasting decision.

"I knew right then and there, I wanted to be there for my son," she says.

Professionally, she'd just completed a phenomenal year, having been named salesperson of the year and salesperson with the highest growth for the year, in a Southeast territory covering Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina and South Carolina.

Additionally, her work fit well with her husband, Dr. Rashid Buttar of The Center for Advanced Medicine and Clinical Research in The Park Huntersville, a practice that treats adults and children who suffer from autism and cancer as well as "treatment failures" — patients for whom conventional treatments and alternative treatments have failed.

Yet, despite the positives of her having her own career, Debbie Buttar left her job on good terms and settled in to care for her family, unwittingly

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THE HERALD'S



Around Town

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in North Mecklenburg
and beyond.

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AROUND TOWN



COURTESY JIM MAXWELL

The Lions' share

The Huntersville Lions Club recently donated \$4,681 to Historic Rural Hill, revenues the club earned for working the parking lot during the Loch Norman Highland Games. Above, George McCausland (right), president of the Huntersville Lions, presents the check to Rural Hill Executive Director Ed McLean.

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opening new doors. "Although I love being a stay-at-home mom, publishing a book has allowed me to branch out and maintain my own identity," she says.

Buttar contacted one of the sanctuaries she supports to inquire about sharing a portion of the proceeds from her book, but was surprisingly turned down.

"They were already working with someone connected to the organization who was writing a book to support their mission, so they said, 'Thanks but no thanks,'" says Buttar.

Instead, Buttar's book supports a cause closer to home: children suffering from cancer or autism through a group of doctors led by her husband called AMESPA, The Advanced Medical Education and Services Physician Association Research and Treatment Foundation.

Today, Buttar gladly takes Tonga to area preschools and libraries for story time, sharing both the story and the importance of caring for animals.

Tonga, *The African Elephant Story* is available for \$9.99 at www.ChildrensStoriesThatTeach.com (where a video link to rehabilitated elephants is available.) You'll also find her book

on Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, and Bordersbooks.com at a cost of \$14.95. A portion of proceeds from all sales go to AMESPA.

To schedule Buttar for a preschool or children's group visit, call 704-506-3154 or e-mail her at StoriesThatTeach@aol.com.

— Ann Fletcher

Wildcat car wash

The Huntersville Wildcats cheer-leading squad, based at Torrence Creek Elementary, is having a car wash and barbecue sale on May 31, from 2 to 6 p.m. at Beatty's Barbershop at 12900 Statesville Road in Huntersville, across from Lake Norman Honda.

The squad will wash cars for a minimum \$5 donation, offer raffle tickets for sale to win a number of prizes, and serve barbecue plates for \$8 with two sides and a drink or dessert. This fundraiser will help the girls compete on a national level. The squad placed first in the Charlotte regional competition and placed fifth out of 14 squads at the state competition recently held in Greensboro.

For more information about the event or about the Huntersville Wildcats, contact **Jennifer Bond** at Jennifer.bond@rubbermaid.com or call 704-490-6017



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