



UP CLOSE

Marblehead author and artist team to help kids read

LAURIE SWOPE FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Laura Barr Sargent (left) and Patti O'Hare Williams with their e-book.

By Wendy Killeen GLOBE CORRESPONDENT OCTOBER 06, 2015

Laura Barr Sargent and Patti O'Hare Williams, both of Marblehead, are fast friends who are both “creative and a little wacky,” they said.

Sargent, an educator, and Williams, an artist, are now author and illustrator of the first in a series of e-books called “[Hop on Reading](#),” aimed at helping early, struggling, and dyslexic readers.

Sargent, who has a degree in music education from the University of Montana and specialized in special education and reading, also has a master’s in education from Harvard.

She and her late husband, Rocky, both avid sailors, traveled widely.

“Everywhere we went, I would visit the schools and that was how I learned about the culture,” Sargent said. “That’s how I explored the world.”

When living on Mustique Island in the Caribbean for 10 years — where she said 20 percent of the population is dyslexic — she set up a structured literacy program based on the [Orton-Gillingham Approach](#). It’s a sequential, phonics-based audio, visual, and repetitive method to help students with reading, writing, speaking, and math.

When Sargent considered writing a book and wanted illustrations, she thought, “Who better than Patti?”

“She’s able to take simple text and create illustrations that make it interesting,” Sargent said. “I’d have a story in my mind and she’d interpret it and it would be perfect.”

“A lot of design and art is problem solving,” Williams said. “Our goal was to have the characters be culturally diverse and fun, and engage the readers.

“I enjoyed the challenge and [Sargent] and I would laugh a lot.”

“Hop on Reading,” the first in a series of seven, is available online at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Kindle through a partnership with [Trajectory Inc.](#) of Marblehead.

“Our goal is to help struggling readers,” Williams said. “And if we can do that, it’s great.”

Wendy Killeen

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