

## Local Author Spotlight:

# ANDREA CASSELL

By LYNN HOBBS

**H**ER RESUME SAYS SHE'S A FORMER NFL/Miami Dolphins cheerleader, former wearer of the Mrs. Kansas crown, professional singer, television personality, artist, special education teacher for 30 years, cookbook author, and wife and mother of four children; but to Kibby the Labradoodle, she's just "Mom."

And thanks to Kibby, Andrea Cassell has added "award-winning children's book author" to her vibrant list of accomplishments. Her two books, *Kibby The Space Dog*, and *Kibby Gets a Little Sister*, are both recipients of the Gold award from the prestigious Mom's Choice Awards.

"My motto is 'never stop creating who you are,'" she said. "Everything I've done, I've said to myself 'go big, or go home.' And at my age, I still want to make a difference in people's lives. I want them to know 'don't settle. You can still be the best you can be.'"

She created a cookbook in 2010 entitled *Nahima's Hands: Unique Mediterranean Cuisine* to pass along her late grandmother's legacy to her children. But its success turned into a newfound passion and title for herself.

"So, I started selling it and it started selling like crazy," she recalled. "I got so much press on it, and Kroger picked it up and it was on the bestseller list at several bookstores. It was pretty exciting to be on the table right beside James Patterson's books. Are you kidding?! .... Every time someone says 'I love your recipes,' it brings me back to my grandmother and brings me joy."

The love of her Mediterranean heritage is apparent in her miniature Labradoodle's name. She said "Kibby" is named after an Arabic meat dish called "kibbeh, kibbie, or kibbee." One day, Kibby needed some stitches in one of his paws and, as is common, the veterinarian put a cone around his head to keep him from chewing the stitches out.

Whenever Andrea or her husband, Joe, took Kibby on his daily walks through the neighborhood, they noticed a change in how other dogs and people responded to Kibby while he was wearing the cone. In fact, the difference was that they didn't respond at all, but seemed to ignore or avoid him, whereas before the "cone of shame," everyone greeted and interacted with Kibby.

"So that's where the concept for the Kibby book came from," she said. "It reminded me of my teaching days when other kids would make fun of, or tease, my special education students. And I was inspired to write a book about not judging others for the way they look or because they seem different."

Andrea self-published *Kibby The Space Dog* in 2015. They



were living in Wichita, Kansas at the time, and she said she was fortunate to find the book's illustrator, Melanie Regier, at a party they both attended. Andrea said Melanie is also an illustrator for Hallmark.

Their second book, *Kibby Gets a Little Sister*, was published in 2017. It teaches children what to expect when a new sibling comes along, and how to get along with them. As the mother of four children, Andrea's inspiration came from watching the experiences of each child when the next one was born and arrived home from the hospital. "It was a joy to write because it brought back warm memories of those very special days!" she wrote in the book's introduction.

Another book in the Kibby series, *Kibby and Olive Move to Georgia*, is scheduled to be released around the same time this issue of *Lakelife* is out. Andrea, Joe and Kibby moved from Kansas to Reynolds Lake Oconee a year ago "when my husband retired and wanted to play golf every day. So, this was such an easy book to write as I saw how Kibby reacted to his new environment. I hope it helps children who are moving to new homes," she said. ★

### WHERE TO BUY

All of Andrea Cassell's books are available at:

#### 44 MARKET PLACE

103 Harmony Crossing, Eatonton, 706-714-4495

#### GREENSBORO ANTIQUE MALL

101 South Main St., Greensboro, 706-453-9100

#### GEORGIA WRITERS MUSEUM

109 S. Jefferson Avenue, Eatonton, 706-991-5119

ANDREACASSELL.COM and AMAZON