

Space adventure sends down-to-earth message

By Megan Hess
Review Staff Writer

We might be a few years away from outer space vacations, but summer camp is no new idea. Lake Orion's Lee Bissonnette has combined the two in her new children's book series, *George Hawkins, Space Camper*.

Set on Ganymede, a moon of Jupiter, six youth head to summer camp. Bissonnette's characters make their way through high-energy, high-adventure story lines in space without the "dark messages" the author says have invaded other youth science fiction, like *Harry Potter* and *Twilight*.

"I wanted to write a series not built on exploding zombies, but one that is all about adventure, values, consequences for actions and who you want to be when you grow up," Bissonnette said.

Her pen was motivated by the attack on the World Trade Center's twin towers and the Pentagon.

"It was like the whole country got really sad. Children needed something that

said, 'we are one planet, we can do anything,'" said Bissonnette. "Sadness gripped the nation and the world and I started to write adventurous stores of hope and courage where good can overcome evil, when people trust each other and work together."

She says she chose to write about space adventures after watching the Apollo missions while growing up. And, though the books are set amid the stars, Bissonnette says she sends a down-to-earth message about friendship, teamwork and overcoming challenges.

"It's adventure that is still innocent," she said, adding, "[The books] still have conflict, evil, explosions, aliens and adventures but there's no spewing blood and that kind of thing."

The author, and mom, also included aspects of everyday life, like children drinking out of the milk carton, to keep the storylines relatable.

The first book in Bissonnette's *George Hawkins, Space Camper* series, titled *It*

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moved forward at full speed with the books.

She graduated from the University of Minnesota with a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering and from the University of Phoenix with a Master of Business Administration.

A mother of two, and wife for 21 years, Bissonnette will be featured in a Knowledge Crush presentation of *Extreme Renovation*. The film focuses on women in Michigan who have done a 180 in career paths due to the current economy and job market. The film will be present at the Traverse City Film Festival, October 15 through 17.

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Lee Bissonnette's first book in the *George Hawkins, Space Camper* series. Photo by Megan Hess.

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Comes from Within, went on sale this past April.

The second book, *Past and Present Fear*, will be out by Christmas.

To purchase books, visit www.georgehawkinsspacecamper.com or www.malloybooks.com and search for "bismil."

Bissonnette has worked for eight years on her children's series, and has finished six books and is working on the seventh. The author says she squeezed in writing time late in the evenings. Bissonnette was laid off in December 2008 from Inalfa, a sun roof company, and it was then she