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## Rockland Author Writes Groundbreaking Children's Book in Braille and Print

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"To see the world through the eyes of a child" is an expression most often used by world-weary adults who long for the innocence and wonder that childhood represents. But even childhood has its share of challenges, including the bullying that sometimes comes from being seen as "different."

First time author Jean Barlow has found a way to capture this duality in her unique and uplifting children's book, "I See The World." Based on a poem by local songwriter Karen Benedetto, who herself based it upon her own vision-impaired early childhood, the book tells in simple rhyme the story of three children who all "see" the world differently—one wears glasses, one wears an eye patch, and one is blind. However, by presenting each child as matter-of-factly cheerful, confident and energetic, Barlow essentially strips away the stigma that others might attach to these "different" children.

"When Karen brought me this poem about her own personal childhood experiences of feeling different and left out because she wore a patch and had thick glasses," Barlow explains, "I knew I wanted it to become a book to encourage sensitivity to people with disabilities."

Thus the book not only teaches readers—both children and their adults—about how different people might physically "see" the world, it also teaches readers to "see" that outward differences really don't reflect who a person is inside. It is this lesson of being able to "see" through the heart, conveyed in language geared toward children age three and up, which truly sets the book apart.

Barlow decided early on to self-publish the book in order to retain creative control of her vision, and she has overseen every aspect of its production. From the start she knew it had to be as accessible to visually impaired children as it was to those sighted; she conquered the challenge by not only finding a Braille translator, but also finding a printer who would be willing to simultaneously print both in traditional text



traditional printers do not do. Amazingly she found a willing printer just a stone's throw away in Clifton, NJ. "I See The World" is possibly one of the only books of its kind, designed from the start to be published both in print and Braille.

Barlow's circuitous path to becoming a writer started out with her career in the performing arts. She worked as an actress and TV spokesperson, but also supported herself over the years through a variety of temporary and part time office jobs. During this time she met Benedetto and began to promote her songs and music. Ultimately that led her to the poem and the book's inspiration. Now working out of her Congers home, Barlow has devoted herself full time to producing and marketing the book, utilizing the promotional and multi-tasking skills she developed over her professional lifetime.

In its current iteration, "I See The World" is a complete package which includes the colorfully illustrated print and Braille book, a Braille alphabet card and a CD of the story set to music by Benedetto. "I See The World" can now be found in the libraries of over 50 schools and school districts, including several throughout Rockland County. The book is also available in many public libraries including most of those in Rockland. Barlow often donates her time to read to



"My book has a message that I just passionately believe in," she says. "And I'm on the cusp of taking it to the next level." So far she has sold or distributed 1,500 copies on her solo marketing efforts alone, and she hopes to be able to engage more help in the near future to really expand the book's reach.

With what spare time she has Barlow actively gives back to the Rockland community. In addition to being heavily involved in the Lions Club of Nanuet, she volunteers as a driver for Helping Hands and Meals on Wheels, prepares and serves meals at Soup Angels, is a regular helper at People to People and

poll inspector for the Board of Elections.

The special beauty of "I See The World" is that not only is it accessible to blind children, it is also accessible to visually impaired parents and relatives of sighted children. With its upbeat message of tolerance and acceptance, it would make a wonderful holiday addition to any family's library.

To learn more about "I See The World" and its author, visit the website at [www.ISeeTheWorld-Childrens-Book.com](http://www.ISeeTheWorld-Childrens-Book.com). The book retails at \$23.95, and can be purchased directly from Jean Barlow by calling 845-268-3170 or emailing at [Jean.ISeeTheWorld@verizon.net](mailto:Jean.ISeeTheWorld@verizon.net). Quantity