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**Photographer of children's book Nico and Lola visits Lutheran General**

Bridget Doyle/triblocal.com staff reporter 07/02/09 02:19 PM 404 hits

Kindness was the overall theme at Advocate Lutheran General Children's Hospital on June 30. Susan Graunke, photographer for the children's book Nico and Lola visited with patients and read the story of a young boy's understanding of what it is to be kind.

"The story is about teaching the concept of kindness," Graunke said. "It's a concept that seems so abstract, but you can actually see the it in the story's photos."

After listening to the story, the children colored pictures, made pug hats and received postcards of Lola to put up in their hospital rooms. Because only a small number of patients could leave their hospital room to hear the story, Graunke also visited individual rooms to read to those who couldn't make the group story time.

On June 1, Nico and Lola was awarded first place at the New York Book Festival Children's Book Award. Nico and Lola is a children's book about a young boy, Nico, and his friendship with his aunt's Pug, Lola. Throughout the story, Nico learns different ways to care for his canine companion

"I always thought I'd be the one writing, but I've turned into an avid photographer," Graunke said. "We took more than 3,000 photos for the book. It was all about being in the right place at the right time."

The concept for Nico and Lola is based on a true story from a time when Graunke asked the book's author Meggan Hill and her 3-year-old son Nico to watch her dog Lola for the weekend. Graunke is from Barrington and owns Kickapoo Farms in Barrington. Nico and Lola was Graunke's first professional photo project.

For more information about Nico and Lola, go to [www.nicoandlola.com](http://www.nicoandlola.com).

By [Bridget Doyle](#), Triblocal Reporter

(Click on a photo to see a larger view)



Susan Graunke, photographer for Nico and Lola, reads to patients on June 30.



Vivian Karwatowicz, 7, listens to the story with a personal visit from Graunke.



Danielle Andreolas, 8, works on her Lola-like pug hat with hospital intern.



Andreolas made a pug hat for herself as well as her little sisters.



Afraz Bakar, 12, worked with Graunke on his pug hat.

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