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Local artist releases first book in series to help kids make adventures out of everyday experiences

Tempe artist Jo Ann Briseño made a splash last year when the napkin art she had been including in her daughter's school lunch box for the past four years to document her milestones and experiences garnered interest and became a gallery exhibition at Millet House Gallery in Mesa. That show eventually led the artist to meet local publisher Katja Lehmann of Kryptic Leaf, who was interested in Briseño's idea of developing her napkin art into a series of stories to help special needs children learn how to navigate everyday experiences and to show all kids that they have more in common than different.

"My most important role in life is being the best advocate I can be for my daughter," Briseño said. "So when I met with Katja and was offered the opportunity to develop children's books from the adventures I'd been capturing in the daily art pieces, I can't tell you how excited I was!"

Briseño's first book in the Maya's Adventures series is *A Day at the Library*. In it, we meet Maya, a spunky and fun-loving eight-year-old girl who just happens to have Down syndrome. Maya finds joy in a multitude of activities, so when her mom suggests going to the library, Maya enthusiastically agrees. She gathers the books she needs to return and is ready to go. Beautifully hand-colored illustrations engage children in a joyful story of learning what to expect. After all, libraries offer more than books and quiet spaces.

"In social stories for special needs children, the idea is to help them realize what might happen and how to manage situations that might seem stressful or frightening at first. And for kids who aren't special needs, these stories can show that we all like similar things, no matter what our abilities," Briseño explained.

To learn more about Jo Ann's books, visit www.Krypticleaf.com or www.jbrisen.com call 480 295 6037, or email krypticleaf@gmail.com.

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