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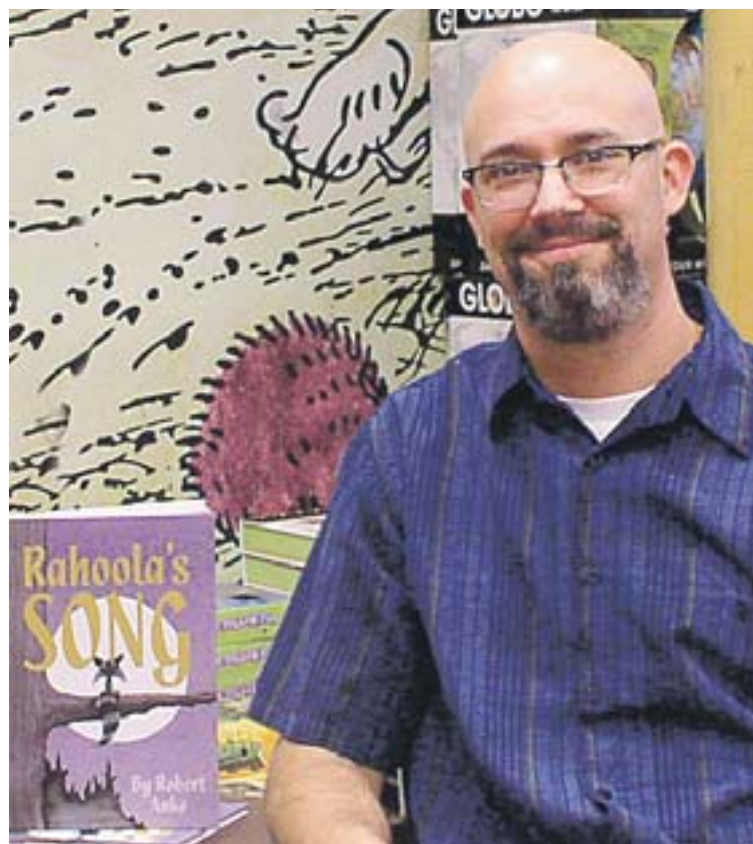
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## Author, Illustrator, Teacher

By Cathy Dausman

*In a forest with trees pointing up to the moon, there lived and there sang an uncommon raccoon. Listening closely, you could hear him each night, his voice softly weaving its way through the heights. High in his perch at the top of a tree, Rahooola sang simply to set a song free. — Rahooola's Song (Cupola Press, 2012)*



Robert Anke

Photo Gail Perry Johnston

With the debut of *Rahooola's Song*, first year Stanley Middle School art teacher Robert Anke can now add another title to his name: published author. Anke, whose *Running in the Halls* comic ran in a local paper for one year, illustrated the 32-page hardback children's book. The story left at least one critic likening it to having "the fun and heart of a Dr. Seuss [book]." It even has the rhyme.

Anke, who loves to draw, began the project 12 years ago in college as a way to teach children a simple lesson: that we are enough. "True, lasting happiness and contentment is not found outside of us," he said. He wrote the story first, following up with illustrations. Start to finish, the second go-around took over two years to complete, as he "forced the rhyme to get better by employing an economy of words."

The story features Rahooola, a happy, singing raccoon, who receives an unexpected inheritance which changes his life.

Anke liked the alliterative sound of Rahooola Raccoon, and the "larger, spiritual tradition" of the

name, which is drawn from the name given to Buddha's only child (usually spelled Rahula). He used his 6-year-old son as a "beta reader" for the story.

The busy middle school art teacher, and former Springhill Elementary school teacher, is the son and grandson of a teacher.

"If I won the lottery I'd still teach half-time," he said. Yet he continues his work as an author while immersed in learning two new art curriculums and advising the Stanley yearbook class. Anke, who said it feels good to have met his publishing goal, appreciates the support his students and their parents have shown by attending his area book store readings.

He has finished the writing portion of a second book, designed for a toddler audience and is also midway through the development of a fall-themed book of prose for elementary students. Anke the author. Anke the teacher. Perhaps an unexpected inheritance for us all.

*Rahooola's Song* is published by Cupola Press (www.cupolapress.com/RahooolasSong.html) and is available online.

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