



Minnesota Parent Magazine

August, 2007

Circulation: 70,000

Location: Minneapolis, MN

Books for and about real kids

William loves sports and boats. He was thrilled to throw out the first pitch at a baseball game. He has light brown skin, dark curls, and dimples. His friends have blonde hair, straight dark hair, and curly red hair; they have dark skin, light skin, and freckles.

But when William's mom, JoAnne Pastel of Orono, Minn., went to bookstores, she couldn't find any books about kids like her biracial son and his friends.

Her friend Kakie Fitzsimmons, whose son Isaiah is also biracial, encountered the same thing.

So the two created Bur Bur & Friends to fill that need. For now, Bur Bur — named after William's imaginary friend — is the main character in a series of books. But puzzles, T-shirts, dolls, and educational software are also in the works.

"Our goal is to become a household name," Pastel says.

The Bur Bur books aren't about being



PHOTO COURTESY OF FARMER'S HAT PRODUCTIONS

JoAnne Pastel and Kakie Fitzsimmons created Bur Bur and Friends to reflect the diversity of 'the real world.'

biracial. They're about boating, hiking, fishing, and baseball and doing other active things outdoors. But Bur Bur has a white father and a black mother and the other kids, all modeled on William's real-life friends, are a more diverse group than you'll see in most kids' books (if you don't count the motley crew of frogs, mice, raccoons, and bears that are often stand-ins for real people).

As Fitzsimmons put it, they "reflect the real world. The time has come."

The pair's entrepreneurial spirit has them a place as a semifinalist for the 2007 Minnesota Cup, an award created to honor innovative business ideas. Finalists will be announced this month.

Bur Bur books are available at BurBurAndFriends.com. ★

— Tricia Cornell