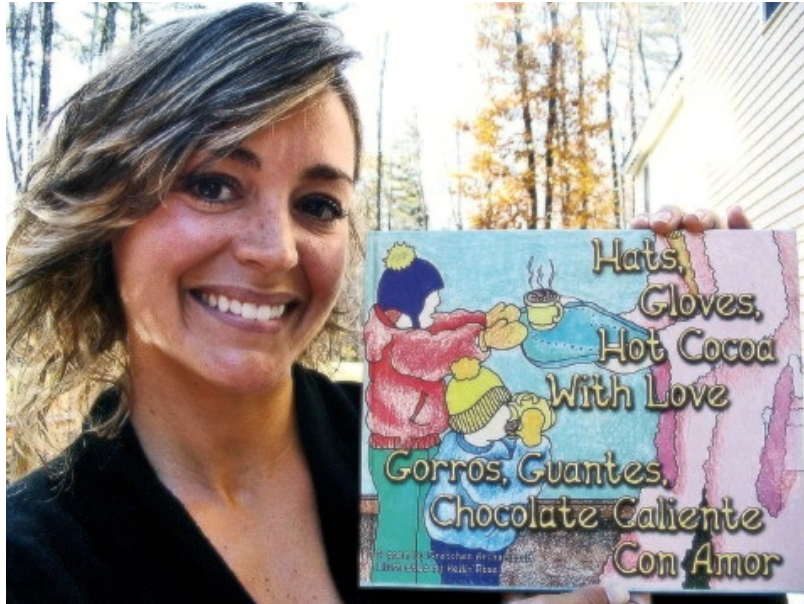


# Winter reading

## Mom's new book focuses on New England memories, modern families

By Nathan Lamb

Posted: 10/30/2009 07:32:41 AM EDT



Pepperell  
**FREE PRESS**  
.com

Pepperell resident and first-time author Gretchen Archambault proudly displays a copy of her recently released picture book, *Hats, Gloves, Hot Cocoa With Love*. A housewife and mother by trade, she said the book focuses on holiday-season images, and was inspired by her two children.

**PEPPERELL** -- Family feasts, snowball fights, and relaxing by a warm fire. These are all traditional images of the holiday season in New England, and they are the focus of a recently published picture book by first-time author, Gretchen Archambault.

Archambault said the 32 pages of *Hats, Gloves, Hot Cocoa With Love* were inspired by holiday memories with family, both from her childhood and as mother of two children, whom she cited as the main inspiration behind the project.

"I thought I'd like to really write a back-to-basics book that would stimulate all the senses and would be appealing to the young-at-heart and young people," she said. "For me, it brings me back to all the things I do with my children and what I used to do as a child. It's all the same things; it never changes."

The book is intended for children 6-and-under, and it also includes hidden angels for the kids to find and a homemade hot cocoa recipe Archambault developed with help from her children, Neris, 7, and Tighe, 5.

The book is also bilingual, allowing a parents to read it in English or Spanish, a twist Archambault attributed in large part to her mother's roots in the Dominican Republic, saying it's important to pass that heritage along to her children. It's also a good way to expose children to a second language, she added.

A self-described soccer mom and occasional substitute teacher, Archambault said the book required over two years work, which began with inspiration, but then became bogged down with lukewarm responses from publishing houses over the next eight months.

The turning point, she said, was deciding to self-publish through her own company, **Angel Children Books**. While that required a lot more business-end work, she said figuring out where to start was the hardest part, with the rest relatively cut and dried.

Once her mind was made up, Archambault took some classes on self-publishing and soon networked into a partnership with Westford-based artist Keith Rose to provide the illustrations, enlisting another friend-of-a-friend to provide graphic designs.

While making it a group effort helped keep costs down, Archambault said the cost of professional grade binding and publishing for 500 hardback copies of the book cost "a lot", saying her short-term goals were to finish the project and eventually break even. Having marketed the book through the Internet and grass-roots methods -- such as donating it to libraries -- she estimated its sold about 200 copies since being released in late September, adding another edition is possible if sales are strong, but the book was already a success in her eyes.

"In the end it's not about becoming rich and famous," she said. "For me it's about having a dream and accomplishing something for my children."

Archambault said she has some other seasonal book ideas, but is currently waiting to see how this book is received before moving ahead within another.

*Hats, Gloves, Hot Cocoa With Love* is available through several local merchants, which are listed on Archambault's Web site, [www.angelchildrenbooks.com](http://www.angelchildrenbooks.com). It is also available through Amazon.com.