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'Crush': Q-C woman writes book of love poems for teens

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By **Kelsey Miller**, southof20@qconline.com

“Crush.”

It's a word that can seem so simple, yet these five letters describe something that can be extremely difficult.

To adolescent girls, the word “crush” normally describes their feelings for a boy. To Jodie Toohey of Davenport, the word was inspiration for the book she has created.

“Crush and Other Love Poems for Girls” is a book that features poems for girls ages 10-18. The book is divided into four chapters; The Crush, The Relationship, The Break-up, and The Closure.

Many teenage girls tend to develop crushes in their pre-teen years. However, to many people, such as family or friends, a crush may seem only “cute” or perhaps “this week's fling.”

“Our friends, when we are pre-teens and teens, sometimes seem just interested in the ‘who loves who’ of dating, and families treat the feelings as ‘cute’ or tease,” Ms. Toohey says. “This can be isolating for young girls, as they may get the message that their feelings are not real, which is confusing because they feel real.”

Ms. Toohey has been writing as a hobby for 25 years. Her work includes poetry, journal entries, personal essays, and creative nonfiction.

When she was in high school, she sent many essays and poems to publishers, she says. Although she had no success in gaining actual publication, she had great success with “learning the querying and rejection process,” she says.

Today, in addition to continuing her writing, Ms. Toohey works full time as a paralegal. She is a wife and mother of two, and she leads a Junior Girl Scout Troop. Her hobbies include walking and scrapbooking.

The author says the inspiration for “Crush” came from a moment she experienced with her 10-year-old daughter while they were browsing in the pre-teen/young-adult section of a bookstore.

“I asked my daughter if there was a book of poetry for girls her age and a little older, if she would read it. She was immediately interested and answered, ‘Where?’ I told her there wasn't



Photo: Submitted
Jodie Toohey

one, and when she looked a little confused, I told her maybe I would make a book like that.

“She told me, ‘You can’t do that.’ When I asked why, she answered, ‘You’re not good at that sort of thing.’ I now had two motivations for moving ahead to publication: 1) If she was interested in such a book, I thought other girls would be as well; and 2) I wanted to show her that anyone can accomplish anything with hard work and dedication, even old Mom.”

Teens who pick up “Crush” can expect to read poetry that is both honest and insightful, that addresses both the good and bad moments of a relationship.

“The message I hope girls take from reading Crush is that their feelings are normal and it is OK to love someone from afar and feel deeply hurt when a relationship doesn’t work out,” Ms. Toohey says. “I want girls to know their feelings are real; they matter; and they are important to learning about who we are and what we want from life. I want them to have a sense of entitlement to their feelings.”

Kelsey Miller is a student at Sherrard High School. Meet the author

Want to meet the author of ‘Crush and other Love Poems for Girls’? Her scheduled book signings include:

-- 10 a.m. to noon today at the Davenport Library, 3000 N. Fairmount St. Cookies, punch, and a make-and-take craft project will be provided. Admission is free. For more information call (563) 328-6833, or go to www.davenportlibrary.com.

-- 2 p.m. Saturday, May 31, at Borders, 4000 E. 53rd St., Davenport.

-- 1:30 p.m. Saturday, July 12, at the Midwest Writing Center, Bucktown Center for the Arts, Suite 303, 225 E. 2nd St., Davenport.