

Photographer captures family connections

By GIA MILLER

When you meet photographer Amy Drucker, you immediately feel at ease. Her petite frame, calm manner and warm smile comforts both adults and children as they welcome her into their homes. She's not there to line everyone up in front of the fireplace. She's there to document their lives and tell a story about their family.

Ms. Drucker often focuses on children, who she loves to photograph because she finds that they are filled with emotions that they have not yet learned to hide.

She has developed a strong repeat business with families who hire her annually to photograph their kids as they grow. Not only do the parents look forward to seeing her, but the children do as well. When Ms. Drucker arrives, she often receives gifts from the kids, pictures they've drawn for her because they are so excited to see her again.

'I wanted to write a book of what it feels like to be in your family.'

— PHOTOGRAPHER AMY DRUCKER



GINA COOPERMAN PHOTO

Amy Drucker's new book is titled "Real Life Family Photography."

place in her heart.

In fact, it was the birth of her second son, Quinn, that inspired Ms. Drucker to return to a career in photography after years of pursuing it as a hobby. Quinn, now 9, and Jake, now 18, became her muses; her eye was drawn to them and she began documenting their lives. When it was time for her to return to work, she assessed her skills,

settled on family photography, created a portfolio and "hung up a shingle."

The origins of her book project date back to a period when she began to experiment chronicling the subtle daily changes in her kids' childhoods. "About seven years ago, I bought a new camera and wanted to learn how to use it, so I started a project to take a picture of my family everyday, but

I quit after a couple of months," said Ms. Drucker. "Then I tried it again the next year and also quit, but got a little farther. Then I tried it one more time and it clicked, and I just kept going. It became a really integral part of my days. This book was born out of that project."

Writing a book was a new and exciting process for her. Originally, the publisher approached Ms. Drucker with a very general concept and she created a hook to make it interesting. The publisher's proposal came with one central requirement: the book must use the words "ages" and "stages." This seemed like a natural fit for her work and a way to help answer that constant question: how does she always get such great pictures of her kids, even when they are simply brushing their teeth?

"There are a bazillion books out there about taking pictures of kids," said Ms. Drucker. "I wanted to write a book of what it feels like to be in your family. While you'll find some technical stuff in this book, it's really about learning how to see what is photoworthy in your own family's life, and how to document it."

Ms. Drucker used numerous pictures of her own children in the book, but concerned that it would look too much like a family photo album, she reached out to clients as well, requesting the use of pictures she took of their children. Every person she contacted said yes. She also asked photographer friends to contribute.

The book is divided into four sections: The Basics, Babies, Kids and Family. It is written in the same friendly tone that Ms. Drucker uses when she speaks to any of her clients, regardless of age. And that is one of the secrets to her success.

"She talks to kids like they are real people, she doesn't change her voice or tone," said Kate Galligan, who has hired Ms. Drucker to photograph her family on numerous occasions, including during the birth of baby goats on Ms. Galligan's Katonah property.

"She creates a relationship with the kids and that's why they reveal themselves to her in the photos. Her photographs of my kids are among my most cherished possessions," Ms. Galligan said.