



Wayne photographer's pet project

Stacey Morgan's "AlphaPET Zoup" is a children's book featuring dogs

By Ryan Richards

Where do you go these days to find a xoloitzcuintli?

For photographer Stacey P. Morgan, the elusive creature was discovered in Cranberry, N.J. and her name is Luchia, a Mexican hairless dog.

She needed to photograph a xoloitzcuintli (pronounced *show-low-eats-quint-lee*) for the "X" letter in her new book, "AlphaPET Zoup." The book is filled with portraits of pooches from "A" to "Z." The idea is to teach the alphabet to children, but the artfully photographed subject matter will no doubt also appeal to canine connoisseurs of all ages.

The book is a long time in the making. During an interview in her Wayne home, Morgan placed a thick pile of manuscripts on the living-room coffee table and grabbed some of the books she studied to learn about self-publishing including "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Publishing Children's Books." The result is a handsome hardback, a labor of love that she plans to shop around to catch the eye of a major publisher or literary agent.

Many of the dogs in the book belong to clients; in some cases she had to put the word out that she was searching for a particular breed, such as the Mexican hairless.

For two letters, "U" and "Z," no breed existed, so she employed a little creative license. For "U" she wrote "Unique" for an unknown mixed-breed, and "Zzzz" for "Z," showing a pooch taking a nap—"Let sleeping dogs lie," she wrote.

But for finding one letter she had to look no further than her own home. Striking a regal pose in the book is Delta, a personable Hungarian vizsla who loves to curl up on the couch and lick the hands of visitors.

"He is the 'V,'" she smiled.

Each portrait is accompanied by a whimsical, lyrical description of each pet. For example, the entry "O" depicts a lovable Old English sheepdog, his shaggy head slightly askew. The description reads: "Hi, my name is Mason. I'm all shaggy, gray and white. When my fur falls in my face I lose all my sight. So my mommy ties it in a knot and makes a ponytail on top. Then she brushes all my hair, hugs my neck and calls me 'Bear.'"

And then there's Newton, the sad-eyed

basset hound representing the letter "H": "I am Newton the Basset Hound. My body is big and low to the ground. My legs are short but my ears are long. If breezes blow I get a whiff. My nose can find most anything with just one little sniff."

The book includes "conversation questions" for the little ones. For example the one under the entry for "Hound" asks, "What can you smell with a nose like Newton?"

The photographs capture the unique style of Morgan, an instructor at the Wayne Art Center. The critters were photographed in black and white and then toned and/or hand-painted.

The border of each picture is characteristic of all the subject matter she captures: a black rough edge.

"This is kind of a signature of my work," she pointed out.

Her 7-year-old twins, Grady and Paige, have reviewed the book and gave it a thumbs-up.

"They love it," she said.

With a background in photojournalism, the award-winning Morgan has worked for such newspapers as *The New York Times* and *Baltimore Sun* and magazines such as *Sports Illustrated* and *Vogue*. She has documented subjects from celebrities, sports stars and political bigwigs to farmers toiling in the rice fields of Sulawesi in Indonesia to a group of circus performers, whom she traveled with through three states for one month in 1988.

But always near and dear to her heart are portraits of people's pets and capturing the local landscape.

"I do love what I do," she said.

The rooms of Morgan's home serve as a gallery of her work. In the living room images of such familiar places as Ardrossan and Chanticleer take on an artistic aesthetic, a fine-art quality. One of her other projects is creating a photography book about Ardrossan, the fabled Villanova farm once owned by the late Hope Montgomery Scott, inspiration for "The Philadelphia Story." Her plan is to present the bucolic estate in all four seasons. She is also working on "Animal Crackers," which follows the "A-to-Z" format of "AlphaPETS" but with farm animals as the subject. The animals are all from farms in the region, such as Scottish Highland cows from a Charlestown farmstead and Dorset sheep from Paoli.



John Welsh
Stacey Morgan and Delta, her Hungarian vizsla.



"AlphaPETS" is available at Braxton's and Dogma in Wayne and online at blurb.com/bookstore/detail/359074.

Images from "AlphaPETS" are now on exhibit at Christopher's, 108 N. Wayne Ave., Wayne, through early January. She will have a book-signing at the restaurant on Dec. 5, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. The Radnor Library will also exhibit her pet portraits from mid-November to mid-January in its lobby display cases.

