

VALLEY & STATE

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South Texas 'Christmas miracle' captured in photographs

Picture book brings back memories of historic snowfall

BY SARAH WILLIAMS
THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

A miracle isn't easy to press between the pages of a picture book.

Still, that's what Kathryn Childers accomplished with "Snow: The South Texas Christmas Miracle 2004."

The former morning show host for Channel 3 News in Corpus Christi compiled photos from the region's historic white

Christmas and assembled them for the project sold online and at Texas H-E-B stores.

Childers, a first-time publisher, said the idea for a book came the day of the Dec. 25, 2004, snowfall — the first here in 109 years.

That day, she and her son, a Los Angeles-based writer, drove to Cole Park in Corpus Christi. She recalled the scene and sounds were overwhelming, with people sledding down one of the city's few hills with surfboards and makeshift sleds.

"When we got toward the park it sounded like a school yard on the last day of school. People were giggling ... It was the sound of joy,

My son said 'Somebody ought to do a book about this,'" Childers said.

"We did the book hoping to capture the essence of what happened. Evidently we did, because we've had great success with it."

More than 2,500 snow day snapshots poured in when she put out a call in the Corpus Christi area for the keepsake photos.

The pictures selected from amateur and professional photographers who responded to the call for entries are featured in "Snow."

Prompted by successful sales, Childers is preparing to publish a second edition, tentatively titled "Snow II:

The South Texas Christmas Miracle 2004." This volume would include photos of Galveston and the Rio Grande Valley, areas Childers said are under-represented in the book that's now on shelves.

"It's been successful enough that I've dared to do it again. I didn't know if people would continue to want it, but they are," Childers, 58, said.

"Snow" has been reprinted seven times and is still in demand, she said, particularly as a gift item.

RedCab Publishing and H-E-B have organized a photo contest, asking Brownsville and other Valley residents to submit



Snow is seen covering deck furniture overlooking the Gulf of Mexico in South Texas on Dec. 25, 2004.

COURTESY PHOTO

images for the book. First-, second- and third-place winners will receive H-E-B gift cards worth between \$250 and \$750.

Photos depict Texas wildlife, landscapes and South Texas settings.

PLEASE SEE SNOW, C9

VALLEY & STATE

SNOW

FROM PAGE C1

Palm trees, beaches and citrus groves blanketed in a layer of fresh snow show the contrast of unlikely landscapes in winter white.

Children making snow angels, a snowman built on the Padre Island shore, a Texas Longhorn with snow on its back and horns, and a cardinal and green jay fluffing their feathers to stay warm are a few featured shots.

"The thing that's so amazing is to see things that are so unnatural in snow," Childers said. "We've all seen snow, somewhat, but to see it around a sailboat, or on the beach ... It's just so unnatural, yet so pristine. It's Texas like you've never seen."

Though a few Valley scenes are in the book, like snow-covered flamingos at Gladys Porter Zoo, South Padre Island landmarks, and a few others, Childers wants to have a section for each South Texas region in the new book.

"I want to make sure we get the Valley represented. We want your shots and your beaches," she said.

Childers said she com-

plied the first book to benefit Aransas First, a nonprofit that buys and preserves natural land in South Texas coastal areas.

"It sold out in seven days. We would have had it available in the Valley, but we just couldn't keep up," she said.

Buzz about the book grew quick.

"It's just been so much fun I just want to do it again with the hope that we can bring the same kind of joy to you guys (the Valley) and support the literacy project," she said.

Childers said that since the snowfall brought communities together, she hopes the second edition will also.

"People commented on how they met their neighbors they had never met. People were coming out of their homes, throwing snowballs and meeting each other," she said.

"No matter what the ethnic background or financial situation, everyone got the same gift. I've really enjoyed (sharing) the memories."

For book two, 3,000 entries have already been submitted from the Corpus Christi, Victoria and Galveston areas. Only about 400 will be selected. The photos will not be purchased but entrants will be asked to sign a release form for their use.

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Kathryn Childers

The second book should be available in select Valley H-E-B stores in October 2007. Proceeds will benefit the statewide H-E-B literacy program.

"Snow" is on sale for \$19.95 at texasnowbook.com, and in Corpus Christi H-E-B stores. For contest rules and information, visit texasnowbook.com. The deadline to submit entries by mail is May 15.

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COURTESY PHOTO

Snow covers a beach in Corpus Christi on Dec. 25, 2004. The snow has been called a Christmas miracle by many people and was the first snowfall in South Texas in 109 years. Kathryn Childers has document-

ed the extraordinary meteorological event in her photo book "Snow." Childers is currently seeking photos from the Rio Grande Valley to include in a sequel to her book, aptly titled "Snow 2."