

## Kathleen Shields, Author

by Barbara Haworth

If you are about my age – (let’s say for dignity’s sake, AROUND 60), then you probably have fond memories as I do, of that fresh new package of colored construction paper, blunt edged scissors and Elmer’s glue. And you hopefully remember those coveted chances to visit the school or public library – with eager anticipation; you could not wait to get your hands on those illustrated story books so that you could go to your secret place to read or to have your parents read aloud to you while you studied the pictures. There was something about being read to that made a story so much more exciting and a comfort that came from listening to a friendly voice tell the story.



Enter the artist who is bringing back the story book of those halcyon days, Kathleen Shields. Her stories feature a bright character, Hamilton Troll and together, they are steadfastly holding onto the old days of innocence and the read-aloud storybook. Hamilton and his friends have exciting adventures together and help to reach out with lessons about real-life situations, while at the same time, entertaining us. In speaking with Ms. Shields recently, one feels the enthusiasm of childhood and finds that her main goal is that her stories are light hearted with an ethical and moral value to them and that they are not to be fearsome for a child.

Subjects appropriate in today’s world such as making new friends, getting along with others, learning the art of compromise and problem solving are all incorporated into the telling of Hamilton’s stories. Together, Kathleen and Hamilton learn as they go and then share their experiences and tools and pass them on in unique style. Hamilton’s friends tend to be based upon the characteristics of real animals in our world and how those characteristics mimic some human personality traits. Kathleen utilizes the natural traits of the animals to bring out a personality which is metamorphosed to apply to humans. These experiences are then part of the stories Ms. Shields writes. Characters such as Skeeter Skunk, Barney Bee and Pink Light Sprite along with new characters all have real problems with real solutions that make sense. These characters have taught Hamilton how to cope and to have hope. Cleverly researched, the animals for Shields’ stories find themselves in moral and ethical situations that ring true for today’s changing world. Using nature in this way has given Kathleen’s stories a positive edge that is lacking in children’s culture. On the horizon, Hamilton will meet a squirrel who is afraid of heights, an owl who cannot hoot, a woodpecker who has a run-in with petrified wood, and a raccoon who is a private detective (who doesn’t love a mystery)?

Kathleen always remembers loving to write stories from a very young age and says she wrote everything down. The guiding force for her was her mother, who she has now lost. Her mother had written the first Hamilton story calling him Hamilton Snoot, around 1976 but as Shields explains, “Trolls were considered ugly and not very nice and scary for a child. They represented meanness.” Shields did not see Hamilton as ugly and wrote him herself, taking her cues from her mom’s original and made him a kind and curious character. She has felt that her mother has been there encouraging her and cheering her on, being pleased with the direction Hamilton’s life has taken. In addition, it has been a way for Shields to keep her mother’s spirit in the forefront of her own life’s journey. Being self-taught and using no made up words, Kathleen uses vocabulary words and gives their definitions ensuring that her writing is a teaching tool as well as entertainment.





Kathleen gives enormous credit for her successful books to two illustrators, Leigh A Klug and Carol W Bryant and says that without them, Hamilton and his friends would not have physicality. Bringing the characters to life with artful depictions makes the stories plausible even though they have the look of illustrated characters. Kathleen herself owns a graphic design company in Canyon Lake, Texas and publishes her own books. With these three dedicated ladies providing the fuel, Hamilton's life is about to take off in exciting new directions. According to Shields, Hamilton is going to meet all types of new characters and will learn how to understand their special gifts and traits. Being observant and finding positive in the situations he's in, Hamilton will also be off to travel the world, visiting other

countries and learning about different cultures and languages. I am told he will also be involved in an American series of stories. It is an ambitious undertaking which Kathleen, Ms. Klug and Ms. Bryant are working enthusiastically on to bring to life. Reaching out, cookbook and activity books are also in the works. In the midst of all this story writing, illustrating and publishing, these three busy ladies also make public appearances a priority. They visit public libraries and schools, reading aloud to the children and sharing Hamilton Troll and friends. They spend time engaging and encouraging the children to write and illustrate their own stories. In addition, they also have several book signings planned.



As Shields says, "The sky is the limit as long as you have your imagination." This positive outlook combined with Shields own imagination will take her and Hamilton a long way and as Pink Light Sprite, Hamilton's friend says, "and when you are frightened think of me in the dew, and remember my friend that I do love you."

Kathleen Shields is the author and publisher of the Hamilton Troll series along with Leigh A Klug, Illustrator and Carol W Bryant, Illustrator. Ms. Bryant is also an active member of The Canyon Lake, New Braunfels and Rockport Art Guilds. To find out more go to [www.HamiltonTroll.com](http://www.HamiltonTroll.com).



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