

## Local to read poetry at Chapters book store in St. Catharines

A Virgil man who looks into himself and turns what he finds into poetry will be reading his work for the public next week.

Jim Slominski, a Mori Nursery employee, has for many years sought answers through spiritual journeys, studying yoga, meditation, Tai Chi, Iaido, and other age-old traditions. But it wasn't until the father of two was faced with a frightening future for his son, Jake, that he began recording his thoughts "as a way to keep in touch with the present moment," he said.

Jake, now nine and about to enter Grade 4 at St. Michael, was diagnosed about five years ago with muscular dystrophy, a degenerative muscle disease. To cope with his feelings on hearing the devastating diagnosis, Jim began

filling blank pages of paper with words, at times wrenching and heart-breaking, of his personal thoughts and dreams.

Soon, the poems became an outlet for other thoughts - reflections of nature, relationships with other family members, and the world around us, often painting pictures of beautiful scenes familiar to those who live, and sometimes take for granted, the beauty of Niagara. "I'd sit down, faced with a blank page, and never know what's going to happen, never with a preconceived idea of what I was going to write," he explains.

Using his talent as a wordsmith helped Slominski get through a difficult time, come to terms somewhat with the grief that comes with such devastating news. "I was

quite shocked at how willing I was to look at things that otherwise would have stayed in my imagination," he says. "I was looking inside myself at a different level. I often look back at a poem and am amazed at how honest and open I was - at poems where I was willing to go places I would have feared to go."

*The Wind is a Tall Man Striding*, Slominski's first book of poems published this year, is divided into four sections, each with a different flavour. The first is dedicated to poems of Jake, poems reflecting the feelings of a parent realizing the dreams for a child aren't going to happen, he explains. Some of the others reflect an "uneasy spirituality," he adds, motivated by the realization that those moments of bliss when everything clicks and

comes together are few and far between, and dissolve quickly. Life, he says, is a "kind of dance, looking for nice comfy soft spots that don't last, and learning to live with those areas of myself that are not comfortable, but are just as important as when everything is comfortable.

"When you're faced with a son with a serious illness, a lot of questions arise, and there are no easy answers - in fact there are no answers at all. You live within each moment and make the most of it."

"How will I forever embrace all the things you'll ever touch?" the father asks of his young son. His answer is his poetry, capturing on paper, the way a photographer would with his pictures, memories to hold on to.

He also captures, says

his wife Mary, whom he met while she was a university student in Montreal and he a musician busking in the subway, the "essence of our family."

The author will be read-

ing his poetry at Chapters, Fairview Mall, Aug. 22 at 7:30 p.m.

*The Wind is a Tall Man Striding* is available at Chapters, or at From Japan in NOTL.



Mary, Maya and Jake are the subjects of many of Jim Slominski's poems.