

A Grandmother's Loving Legacy

By Rori Francis Blakeney

Miles and William Rabun got the love for the outdoors honestly. Actually, they got it from their grandmother, Kappitola Williams. Mention her name and most people think of dancing, movement and worship. But, there is a secret – Williams devotes her days to the environment. An environmental scientist with the state of Georgia, she takes to heart Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's . . ."

"My father, Rev. Handy Garfield Williams, was a minister and the baptisms that went on in my backyard was something that never left me," Williams said. "I was raised on a farm in Florida. We lived on the St. Johns River."

It was during those early days that an appreciation for the earth as a part of God's creation was instilled in the mother of one and grandmother of two. Williams, who lives in southwest Atlanta, says "Water is very important to me . . . I built a pond to bring the water to me."

So Williams challenged her grandsons to find that same appreciation for the earth during their summer visits.



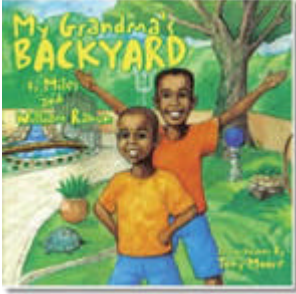
Kappitola Williams of Fort Street UMC passes on her love of earth to her grandsons, Miles and William Rabun.

The result is My Grandma's Backyard, a 24-page picture book illustrated by Atlanta artist Tony Moore and published by Xlibris. It tells the story of the boy's annual trip from their Wake Forest, North Carolina home to her Atlanta home where they find an urban oasis filled with trees, water, turtles and the like.

"We have so much fun in her backyard and she said she wanted us to write a book," said Miles, the older of the two brothers.

The process of writing and producing the book took about a year, the brothers said. "It's fun," said William, a second-grader.

"It's like being the tallest tree in the forest," added Miles, a 9-year-old fourth-grader and the leader of the two.



But his younger brother is just as sharp. During the writing process, William had to give his OK to the sentences and he came up with the rhyming words. Both boys are standout students and athletes.

Academically, Miles enjoys reading and writing, while William would much rather crunch numbers in math class.

The younger, William is a baseball fan while Miles does not have a favorite sport. Active in scouting, Miles has earned the rank of Cub Scout Webelo, and William is Cub Scout Wolf.

In addition to their schoolwork, and recreational activities, the boys have done quite a bit of traveling lately. The two recently visited St. Lucia promoting their book. The four-day tour included several schools and a guest appearance at Windjammer Landing Villa Beach Resort's renowned Children's Cocktail Program. This past summer during the visit to their grandmama's house they made appearances at Atlanta Children's Homeless Shelter, the National Black Arts Festival and a television appearance on Fox 5's Good Day Atlanta and Channel 46.

But what do the boys do when they are not studying or traveling? They are like other children. You can find them playing the latest video games on XBOX 360 – Lego Star Wars 2, the Original Trilogy happens to be both of the boys' favorite, catching a movie like Transformers or Surf's Up or watching television shows such as America's Funniest's Home Video or listening to music greats like Stevie Wonder.

So what's next for the young authors? The two are creating a series of books for children by children.

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