

# CLASS NOTES

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## Students learn how to get wilder with their imaginations

By Erin Johnson  
STAFF WRITER

Tim Smith needed a character. He was going to write a children's book about fishing and wanted the main character to be appropriate.

"I needed a name that was more outdoorsy than Tim Smith," he said.

That marked the birth of Buck Wilder.

From humble beginnings to being the official emblem of the state's Department of Natural Resources, Buck Wilder, and Smith, have come a long way.

Smith is the author of several outdoors guides for children that all feature Buck Wilder. He spent much of last week visiting students in the Huron Valley School District as part of March is Reading month activities.

It was 1995 when Smith first published "Buck Wilder's Small Fry Fishing Guide."

"It became the No. 1 selling book in Michigan," Smith said.

The book then was sold around the country and was soon followed by two more Buck Wilder books, "Buck Wilder's Small Twig Hiking and Camping Guide" and "Buck Wilder's Little Skipper Boating Guide."

Smith, who is from Michigan and currently lives in Traverse City, said children enjoy the books because of the drawings that accompany the writing. On each page there are numerous items to look at including a hidden figure called Fuzzy. The text also goes around the edges of the page so children have to twist and turn the book to read everything.

"That's why kids like them," Smith said.

During his presentations, Smith said he tries to encourage students to use their imaginations and explain that it's all right to make mistakes.

"And why we have erasers on pencils," he said.

While speaking to students at Lakewood Elementary, Smith said that he was an average student who liked to draw and dreamed of being able to fish all day long when he grew up.

"That's all I ever wanted to do," he said.

It was years later, as an adult who owned his own stained glass and furniture business, that Smith decided to share his love of fishing with children through books. He said he wanted the fishing guide to be a happy book so he drew fish with big smiles. Smith also drew a catfish with large, cat paws and made a rock bass true to its name.

"I gave him a guitar and amplifier," Smith said.

He told the students they could also find new ways to be creative such as sitting down with a blank piece of paper and pencil.

"And try something you've never tried before with it," Smith said.

He suggested that instead of drawing with lines, draw with other shapes, or fold the paper and make it into something else.

Smith visited Apollo, Baker, Country Oaks, Heritage,

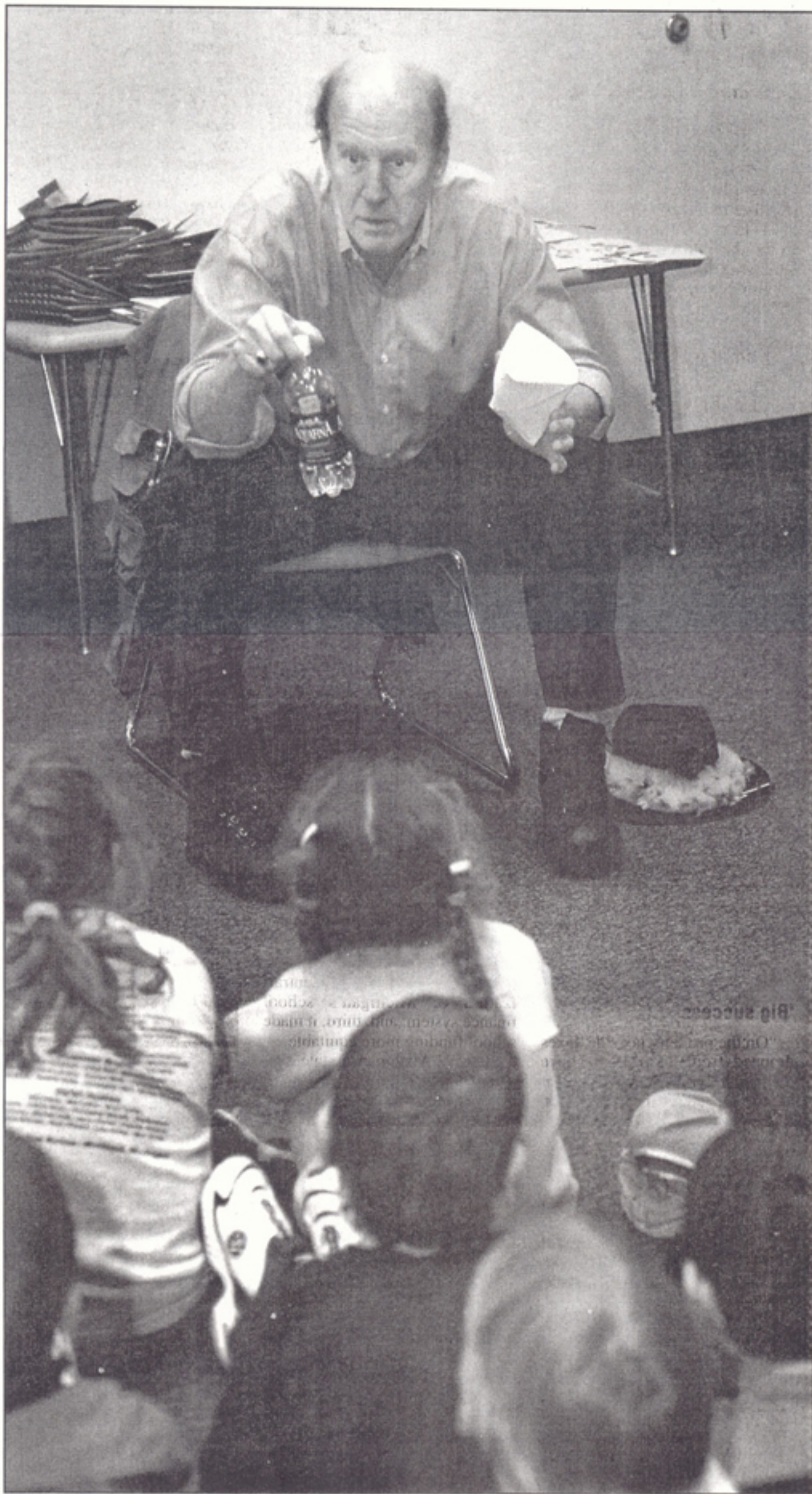


Photo by Hal Gould

**Buck Wilder author Tim Smith demonstrates to students at Spring Mills Elementary how to do something different with a sheet of paper, like making a cup. Smith spoke to students throughout the school district as part of March is Reading Month.**

Highland, Johnson, Oxbow and Spring Mills elementaries in addition to Lakewood. He also held a family night at Heritage where parents could attend with their students. Smith also autographed

books and donated copies of his Buck Wilder books to the school libraries.

For more information about Smith and the Buck Wilder books, visit [www.buckwilder.com](http://www.buckwilder.com)

Erin Johnson is a reporter for the Milford Times. She can be reached at (248) 685-1507, ext. 21, or by e-mail at [ejohnson@ht.homecomm.net](mailto:ejohnson@ht.homecomm.net).