

Special Kids Photography of America

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NEW BOOK TEACHES PHOTOGRAPHERS HOW TO WORK WITH SPECIAL CHILDREN

Most parents want beautiful portraits of their children. But here's the catch: what is considered "beautiful" may be an entirely different concept to a parent of a disabled child than it is to a professional photographer. Nevertheless, some photographers are "getting it," says Karen Dórame, author of *Photographing Children with Special Needs*, a new book published by Amherst Media. "Every photographer who works with children should have this book as a resource, because they will all encounter children with special needs at some point."

Laura Popiel, a photographer in Spring, Texas, observes, "There is a great need for more photographers to really learn how to capture these special kids on film; the families deserve great photos, not the "cookie cutter" pictures they have been getting." Popiel, whose work is featured in the book, goes out of her way to capture loving and natural images of her young clients. She says a client recently told her that one day her medically fragile daughter would be gone and all she would have would be the "awesome photos" that Popiel created. In addition to her photography business, Popiel is also the mother of a boy with Down syndrome.

Sally Harding, a photographer from Phoenix, who discontinued wedding photography in order to afford more time to work with special children, says, "It hits me between the eyes each time I realize how rewarding this work is to me." She also observes how very appreciative the parents are when they find a photographer who cares enough and takes the time needed to create a beautiful photograph of a child with very special needs.

Dórame also founded *Special Kids Photography of America*, a nonprofit organization, and now trains photographers nationwide in the special techniques needed to photograph children with disability or serious illness. The idea was spawned by her daughter who took her disabled son to a photographer for his first portrait, but was nearly turned away because of the photographer's reticence to undertake the task. For training locales or information on book availability, call 623 572-0046 or email skp@cybertrails.com. Visit their website at www.specialkidsphotography.com.

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