

805 LIVING

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Kids
COVER TO COVER

P.S.

By Anthony Head Photograph by Gary Moss

ART LESSONS



When it's back-to-school time, teachers like Jerry Sawitz of Thousand Oaks High School always suspect there may be future stars in their classrooms. That turned out to be the case with his former student, Kevin Tseng. This month, Tseng's first children's book, *Ned's New Home* (Tricycle Press/Random House), will be published, and is in part dedicated to his former art teacher.

"Until his class I only dabbled in art," says Tseng. "But with his help I took it seriously. I thought I might be able to make a career at it."

Into and beyond Tseng's college years, Sawitz continued mentoring him, especially in watercolors, the medium with which he illustrated his story of a friendly worm named Ned who's looking for a new place to live. "I was intimidated by watercolors, but Jerry taught me to know every detail of the image before I even started," says Tseng, who has also begun working out the details of another kids' book. "Children are a very powerful audience. I want to speak to them with cleverness and a sound underlying message. But I always start with the image. I'm an illustrator first."

Sawitz, who celebrates 30 years teaching at Thousand Oaks High this year, is himself an accomplished artist specializing in wildlife paintings and ceramics. He says he's excited to see the book published and is touched by his mention on its dedication page: "It validates the reason I'm a teacher." ■

For more information on Kevin Tseng, including a look at Ned's New Home, go to www.kevint seng.com; to see Jerry Sawitz's artwork, go to www.jerrysawitz.com.