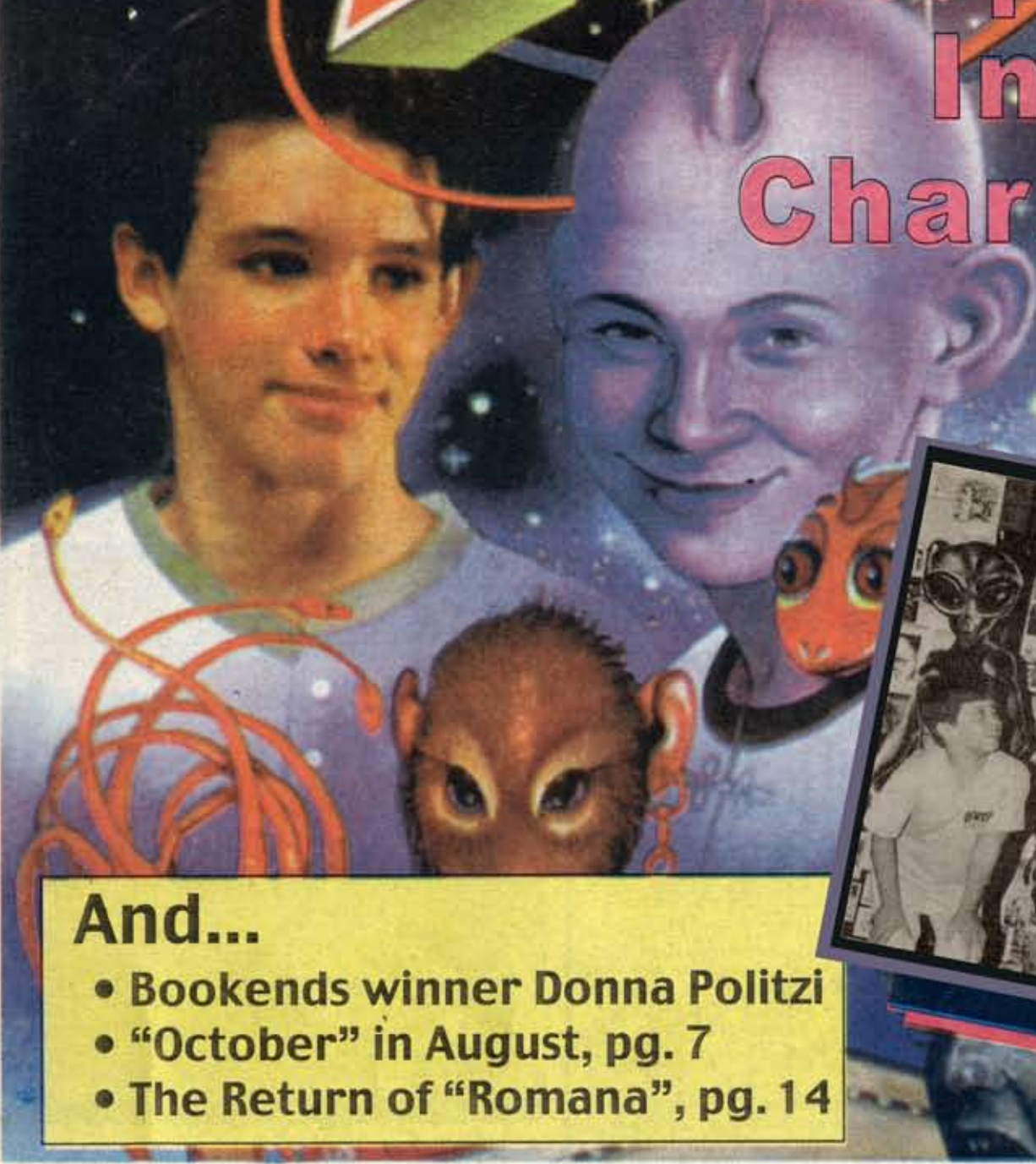


The Fall-Times

# BRUCE COVILLE WEEKEND

Arts & Entertainment  
For the Weekend of August 5 - August 8

## Stepping Into Character



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- Bookends winner Donna Politzi
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It's What's Happening

Under the cover

## Acting up around Oswego

By Tom Mayer  
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Shane Murray's parents love it when he acts up. In fact, the 11-year-old Fitzhugh Park School student has been acting up for more than four months and they couldn't be happier. This is a good thing — especially since Shane is under obligation to continue his behavior for quite a while.

"Just out of the blue," says Shane's father, Tom, about the phone call that came inquiring if he would agree to his son modeling and acting for a series of books written by internationally known children's author Bruce Coville. "I thought it was great."

The call came about this way. Illustrator Tony Sansevero, who works out of Syracuse but makes frequent forays into Oswego, was in Fitzhugh late last year teaching students how to add pictures to their poetry. Always on the watch for that certain look, he noticed Murray and thought he just might fit a role he needed to fill. After meeting Coville at a book signing a year ago, one thing had led to another — with a generous amount of serendipity at hand — and Sansevero was offered the chance to illustrate a 10-book series about sixth-grade space aliens. The project was a perfect fit



### SO, HOW MANY space aliens are in your classroom?

ings), but he needed the right child for a lead role.

"Physically he (Shane) was exactly what I thought the character should look like," Sansevero says. But if he already has a vision in mind for the look of the character, why use real actors?

"I usually use actors because they add a sense of believability in a book," the illustrator says. "Most of the time I hire local actors to 'play' certain characters. They'll read the story like a script, look at my notes, and add certain elements to the character from their own experience and art. I want the characters to be

believable, and what better way than to hire people who do that for a living?"

"But this story was different," Sansevero continues. "Because it takes place in the Syracuse area, I decided to use kids from local schools as models for the book. That can prove difficult at times since it's rare to find a kid that fits a certain image you have in your mind, a physical look, and also can act — to give me expressions and body movements that I can incorporate into an illustration."

After finding and testing Murray, Sansevero was convinced that the Oswego student had what it took to act out roles in "I was a sixth grade alien," the first in the series which is due in stores next week.

Although acting came naturally to Murray, he's met with a few challenges since he's taken on his new role. The hardest to date?

"Licking my palm," Murray says about a scene in which he learns to interact with his new alien friend. "But it's been fun," he says about his new job.

Watching Murray work in the studio with Sansevero, the words "fun" and "great" come up a lot. These two words seem to be the basis of Sansevero's inspiration.

"It needs to be fun," Sansevero says, continuing with an explanation of a "huge alien" party he and Coville had for the actors. Fun, in Sansevero's studio equals great, and great equals believability — perfect for an artist who goes into "each book thinking the characters are



Photo by Tony Sansevero

**HOLD THAT POSE:** Oswegonian Shane Murray has been called a "natural." Here he poses for a scene in an upcoming young adult novel by internationally-famous author Bruce Coville. The 10-book series is being illustrated by Tony Sansevero of Syracuse.



Drawing courtesy of Tony Sansevero

**THE FINISHED PROJECT.** This is the finished drawing, by Sansevero, working from the photo above.