

Why Snakes?



By Mort Laitner and Amy Tejirian

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“I’m so excited! We’ve completed editing Healthy Stories 2008, and it’s ready to go to the publishers,” Mort exclaimed as he walked out of his office holding a stack of papers.

In unison, Tracie and Heather breathed a sigh of relief. All those months of writing and editing had finally paid off – a book with twenty-five original stories and seven stories from the original book translated in Spanish and Creole. They grinned at each other and headed back to their desks.

Amy took the stack of papers from Mort’s hand and started thumbing through it. “Wow, it looks fantastic.”

“Thanks,” Mort replied. “But I think that something is missing. I can’t put my finger on it. When it pops in my head, I’ll know.”

There was a brief pause. Amy handed the stack of papers back to Mort and started to head back to her desk when she heard Mort yelled, “Eureka! We need a logo.”

Amy turned around, “That’s a good idea. Have any ideas of what the logo should look like?”

“Come into my office and help me brainstorm,” Mort said motioning his arm towards his office.

Amy sat at Mort’s computer while Mort started to think out loud, “We need something that represents health, but is unique. We want something that will catch peoples’ eyes. It should be colorful, yet simple.”

Amy listened attentively while she surfed the net. “That sounds like a handful. How can we do all that in a little logo?” As she asked the question, she googled “health” in images. “Maybe we can get some kind of idea looking at other pictures of health.”

However, Mort did not hear a word she said. He was deep in his thoughts. His eyes were focused on another familiar logo, the Miami-Dade County Health Department's smiling apple. "Eureka!" He exclaimed for the second time in ten minutes.

Before Mort could continue, Amy quipped, "You're a regular Archimedes today."

"Snakes!" stated Mort as his eyes lit up.

"Snakes? Why snakes?" Amy was utterly confused.

Mort answered, "Ever hear of Genesis, Adam and Eve, the apple and of course the snake?"

"Um, yeah," Amy said hesitantly, "but what does that have to do with our book?" She continued googling images. This time her search term was "health snake". Immediately a couple of pictures appeared of a short herald's staff entwined by two snakes in the form of a double helix. "Oh, look, the caduceus, the symbol commonly used for medicine or doctors. I guess snakes do have something to do with health, but what?"

"Quite ironic!" Mort retorted, "Since in Roman iconography the Caduceus was carried in the left hand of the Greek god Hermes, the messenger of the gods, guide of the dead and protector of merchants, gamblers, liars and thieves."

"The symbol has neither connection with Hippocrates nor any association with the healing arts."

"How about that other snake health symbol?"

Amy asked, "What other snake symbol?" She clicked the mouse on another image that resembled the last one but was a little different. It linked her to the website for the American Medical Association. "This one?" She pointed to the computer screen.

"Yup, that's the one - the rod of Asclepius, the one with the herald's staff which carries only one snake and no wings," Mort responded

"Well, it has the blessing of the American Medical Association."

"Funny you should mention that, the AMA used the caduceus until 1912 when they prudently switched to the rod of Asclepius."

Amy started to get frustrated. "You still haven't answered my question. Why snakes? What does that have to do with *our* book?"

"OK, OK, I'll tell you. Ever hear of Hygeia, Greek goddess of health?"

“Nope but I’ll bet I’ll get an ear full about her. I can google her if you want. How do you spell that?”

“I’m not sure but it should be spelled similarly to hygiene.” replied Mort. “Do a Wikipedia search for her.”

Amy tried the best she could to spell the unfamiliar word in the search box. Her guess was correct because a page about the Greek goddess Hygieia or Hygeia appeared. They both scanned the screen for a few minutes absorbing all the information they could about this figure in Greek mythology.

Mort broke the silence, “Originally, she was the goddess of physical health and later became the goddess of mental health. Hygeia was often symbolized with a snake drinking from a cup. The snake was associated with healing. It’s from Hygeia we get the word hygiene. Hygiene is the science of preserving health. And that, my dear, is why Healthy Stories uses snakes in its logo; health departments are all about preserving health.”

Healthy Stories is available on Amazon at http://www.amazon.com/Healthy-Stories-Sharing-Health-Department/dp/0615206344/ref=sr_1_7?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1224865070&sr=8-7

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Have you created that delectable delight?
Is it filled with healthy ingredients?
If so, email us your healthy recipe for publication in our next edition.