

By Franklin Crawford

Cara Hoffman's latest book "Be Safe I Love You" (Simon & Schuster) debuted on April 1, and the former Ithaca-based writer was in her New York City apartment fielding a storm of tweets, emails and good old phone calls.

Welcome to the big time. “Be Safe I Love You” is Hoffman’s second novel with a major publishing house. Her first, “So Much Pretty” (also Simon & Schuster), airlifted her out of obscurity and dropped her in the thick of the modern literary world of Manhattan. The book was published in 2009, and Hoffman relocated to the Big Apple in 2010. She was floored when she learned it had sold—for a fat six-figure sum.

“So Much Pretty” was a critical success. Hoffman became the focus of talks and tours, and an outspoken voice on domestic violence. She also cranked out two feminist young-adult books while working on “Be Safe I Love You,” writing under a pseudonym.

finish high school nor attend college. That missing piece was filled when she graduated from Goddard College's master of fine arts (MFA) writing program in 2009, the year "So Much Pretty" was published. The novel became a New York Review of Books pick; the New York Times Book Review listed it as "Best Suspense Novel of 2011." Now, in addition to writing, Hoffman teaches at Bronx Community College, a job she adores, she says.

When Lauren takes her beloved little brother Danny on a road trip into the glacial woods of Canada, they visit the site of an oil field and pitch camp in an old hunting village. Lauren believes she's teaching Danny survival skills for an apocalyptic future she may or may not be there for. Danny's adoration of his big sister becomes a growing unease and fear. The novel bores deeper into the disturbed psyche of Lauren while multiple perspectives flesh out a modern tragedy.

Photo by Marc Lepson

“So far the responses from military folks, both men and women, and their families has been overwhelmingly positive,” says Hoffman. “A lot of research went into this novel, a lot of talking with soldiers, women and men, but the book also is in large part about how military service affects whole families. The decision to join the military and the costs and benefits of that decision do not begin and end with one soldier.”

are other costs.”

Reviews for “Be Safe I Love You” are coming in, and by all accounts it’s another critical success. The Library Journal gave it a starred review, calling the novel “a searing, unforgettable and beautifully written tale about the corrosive effects of war on the psyche. ...” The BBC listed it as one of its “10 Best New Books to Read,” calling Hoffman’s second novel “a fierce and nuanced tribute to women warriors.”

Hoffman honed her reporting chops at the Buffalo Alternative Press and praises her former editor Jim Schmidbauer, who “let me take my kid to work and taught me how to write,” she says. She was a staff reporter for the Cortland Standard and learned to keep pace with daily deadlines, a discipline she’s found invaluable as an author.

She also wrote for the Ithaca Times and served as managing editor for The Bookpress, a local literary journal, no longer published. Hoffman says Bookpress publisher Jack Goldman “was a great influence and a model of intellectual integrity.”

While she doesn't regret missing high school and college, Hoffman is not an advocate for dropping out. She does advocate writing. "If you can get it done within the system, then that's the way to do it," she says.

Over the coming weeks, Hoffman will speak at various literary events in Manhattan, Brooklyn and San Antonio, Texas. In May, she leaves the confines of her writer's den in the East Village to attend the Bristol Festival of Ideas in England.

The Boynton Middle School Math Club team took fifth place overall in a field of the 50 best middle school math teams in New York State at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) for the State MathCounts meet on March 15.

The team is coached by parents Laura Jones and Melissa Smith, with classroom help from parent Gus Dusenberry and weekend MathCounts preparation assistance from Cornell student Tom Chen.

Vivek Myers, Michael Zhao, Yuuki Real and Justin Tan.

The DeWitt Math Club also participated in the meet, taking 19th place overall. The DeWitt team is coached by parent Tom Fisher-York.

dents from each club were chosen to represent their school in the state competition.


addition, for the first time ever, Ithaca students swept the top 10 individual scores. Boynton students took the top four individual places, and had seven students amongst the top 11, with DeWitt students rounding out the top 10.



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