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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

LIRR CELEBRATES NEWLY PUBLISHED RAILROAD CANINE MASCOT CHILDRENS' BOOK

LIRR President, Author And School Kids Honor LIRR'S "Roxey The LIRR Dog" At Penn Station Event

East Northport First Graders Win "Step Over The Gap" Safety Contest

During its 176-year history the Long Island Rail Road has had many good will ambassadors who won praise from its customers and the local community. Few were as widely popular as one that lived and worked the Railroad some 99 years ago. He was even recognized by President Teddy Roosevelt. This representative was relatively young yet at the same time a bit "long in the tooth," he was short and quick of foot with plenty of brown and white body length well-groomed hair, and a ready smile for everyone. His name was Roxey (surname unknown) and was of mixed heritage, although some might say his Terrier family background was obvious.

Roxey, the LIRR dog, served as railroad good-will ambassador from 1901 through 1914 and is now the star of a brand new childrens' book. Miles of Smiles, The Story of Roxey, the Long Island Rail Road Dog, was published this month by Blue Marlin Publications of West Bay Shore. Although the beautifully illustrated book is written for a young audience, adults will enjoy the story's warm message simply told. The author, Heather Hill Worthington of Southold, called the book a "great tale/true story," labeling the work historical fiction. LIRR President Helena Williams said, "The humanity and dedication shown to Roxey are traits that continue to shine brightly today among our employees and customers." We hope Roxey's story will inspire excitement about train travel among a whole new generation of LIRR customers."

Roxey's spirit lives on this year with the LIRR's Elementary School Safety Contest spotlighting not only this famous canine but also the importance of educating young students to "Step Over The Gap" when entering and exiting trains. School districts (grades 1-5) throughout the LIRR's service area were invited to take part in the contest. Of the 41 entries received, the winners were Mrs. Barbara Keefe's first grade class at Trinity Regional School in East Northport. Mrs. Keefe's class was chosen at random from all perfect quiz score contest entries. Each student received a copy of Miles of Smiles autographed by the author as well as a round-trip on the LIRR to and from Penn Station for the book-signing event, courtesy of Blue Marlin Publications.

Roxey's friendly manner is evident from the book's cover that he shares with President Teddy Roosevelt, a frequent LIRR user. President Roosevelt often traveled to his Sagamore Hill home by rail. Miles of Smiles relates an incident where Roxey, an itinerant LIRR traveler, ends up in President Roosevelt's special rail coach. A railroad employee, trying to get Roxey off of the president's bed, is interrupted by Roosevelt who said the dog could stay noting his special LIRR pass and license collar that said "I am Roxey the LIRR dog, whose dog are you."

Roxey was so adored in his time at the LIRR that in 1915 a group of female customers paid for a special headstone marking the railroad mascot's final resting place. The stone inscribed "In Memory Of Roxey LIRR Dog" is still located just south of the LIRR's Merrick Station adjacent to Sunrise Highway.

Miles of Smiles author Heather Hill Worthington grew up on Long Island and lives in Southold with her family. She has worked as a teacher and a journalist.

Book illustrator Bill Farnsworth has worked on more than 50 childrens books and has won a number of awards. He lives in Venice, Florida with his family.