

A New Book Focuses On Issue of Food Allergies

By DANIELA FORTE

SOUTHBURY — Imagine having a young child who breaks out in hives, begins vomiting or has breathing difficulties any time he or she has any type of dairy product, or having a child who can't have a piece of birthday cake with the rest of the children at a party because of food allergies.

The author A. Anderson brings to light, in a conversation-like fashion, the realities of the growing epidemic of food allergies in her new book, "Flourishing With Food Allergies: Social, Emotional And Practical Guidance For Families Young Children," (Papoose Publishing -\$24.95).

Mrs. Anderson will have a book-signing at Borders bookstore in Southbury Oct. 11 at 3 p.m., and is giving a food allergies presentation at the Woodbury Library in Woodbury Oct. 25 from 2 to 4 p.m. The book was completed in August, and

busing companies, the government agencies and national agencies."

The book is broken into two parts; the first tells Mrs. Anderson's detailed story about both her sons' allergies, as well as providing facts, myths and findings about food allergies. She also touches upon the connection food allergies have with disorders such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and asthma.

"I find the subject matter of food allergies and behavioral disorders very interesting. I would really like to plant the seed in people's minds that if their child is having an issue, it might very well be due to something they are eating," said Mrs. Anderson. "Think about how much more complex it is when you can't see the reaction because it's a behavioral thing, and the reaction doesn't take place for a few days."

Mrs. Anderson noted that U.S. Sen. Chris Dodd, a Democrat, proposed The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Management Act, a bill initially introduced in 2006. According to the senator's Web site, www.dodd.senate.gov, the bill addresses the critical need for uniform and consistent food allergy policies in schools while providing resources they need to implement them.

Mrs. Anderson said that it was passed in April of this year by the House of Representatives, and may still be up for vote in the Senate.

"It brings more rights to children who have food allergies in the schools, so they aren't mistreated or not taken care of properly," said Mrs. Anderson.

She and her husband consider their children's allergies a blessing in disguise. Both of their diets have changed, she cooks at home and they hardly buy anything that is pre-packaged. The overall effect is a much-improved diet for the whole family.

"If it has five to 10 ingredients we don't buy it. Our diets have definitely improved and our overall health has improved," said Mrs. Anderson.

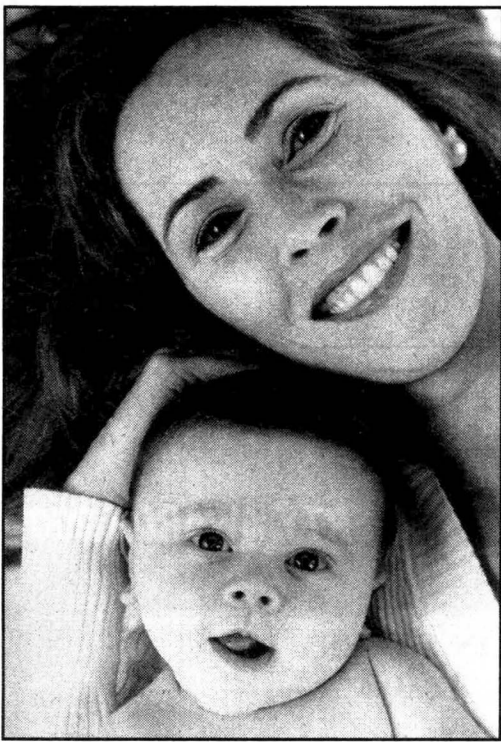
She said that grocery shopping was extremely difficult at first, but she found that the answer was to buy fruits and vegetables, unprocessed potatoes and unprepared beans and just cook. Mrs. Anderson buys organic foods and avoids buying foods like cookies and crackers, which leads to a simpler way of eating.

Some of the contributing factors to food allergies, she said, are the chemicals that livestock are ingesting, and the pesticides that the fruits and vegetables are sprayed with.

In her book, Mrs. Anderson said that researchers have found evidence that pesticides can damage the central nervous system, and the nervous system contributes to how people react to food.

Mrs. Anderson also talked about the financial impact food allergies have on society, and cited the money being spent on special education for children with disorders that might be due in part by food allergies.

"I don't think people are realizing this is going to be a bigger issue in the next five to 10 years," said Mrs. Anderson.



Author A. Anderson and one of her sons, photographed by Catherine Montalbano.

became available this fall.

Mrs. Anderson's book exposes the facts, theories and findings surrounding food allergies, which affect 11.4 million Americans. One in 13 children across the country has food allergies.

The second part of the book offers solutions families may use in connection with the issue of food allergies and their children. The book also gives the perspective of teachers, doctors, a therapist and a father. Mrs. Anderson includes

When Mrs. Anderson found out that her sons had food allergies, she often found herself searching for the right books that would make her feel better. What she found instead were horror stories that led her to stop reading. Mrs. Anderson was then encouraged by a friend, who thought that she should write about food allergies.

"I really wanted to write something that would help people [understand] that they can do something about food allergies, not just in their own everyday lives ... but also on a bigger picture—working with federal agencies, and trying to get more funding, and working with the national food allergy agencies in trying to help bring awareness to the whole issue," said Mrs. Anderson.

Her sons are allergic to dairy, egg and chicken products, and Mrs. Anderson was also advised to have her children avoid peanuts and tree nuts.

"We have found that dairy is our most difficult challenge. Not only was our first son's reaction to dairy serious, but we found that dairy is in almost everything we eat in our popular culture," said Mrs. Anderson in her book.

"I asked my older son, 'How do you feel about food allergies?' He said, 'It's a little scary,' so he is aware of it. I have tried not to make him feel too different, but I want him to be aware of it so he just doesn't take food from people," said Mrs. Anderson. "So he is aware of it. He is a little fearful of it, but not overwhelmingly by any means."

A food allergy exists when the immune system kicks into action as a "defense" to the food and creates an IgE antibody to attack the food in the blood stream. Ninety percent of food allergies

useful information regarding diets and the "big eight allergens." She offers tips about what to do while traveling, and at birthday parties, while also discussing kindergarten readiness.

Mrs. Anderson hopes not only to reach out to mothers dealing with the issue but also to relatives of children who are affected. In the first half of the book, Mrs. Anderson provides numerous personal accounts from people whose children have various forms of food allergies, and part of the point of the interviews is to show that having a food allergy is more common than many realize.

There is a food allergy support group that is set up in Woodbury. It is led by Licensed Clinical Social Worker Karen Wolff and advised by Dr. Christopher Randolph, an allergist located in Waterbury and Southbury. Parents of children of all ages are welcome to attend the meetings. For more information on the support group, send an e-mail to Ms. Wolff at kps8566@aol.com. The next meeting is to be held Oct. 9 at 6:30 p.m. at the First Congregational Church in Woodbury.

For more information on Mrs. Anderson's book, visit the Web site www.flourishingwithfoodallergies.com.