

# Fantasy novel a dream come true for Hanover teen author

By **JAKE REMALY**  
STAFF WRITER

**HANOVER** — Whippany Park High School senior A.J. Cunder was sitting on a couch at home when he imagined the first scene of what would become a 500-page fantasy novel, which he is selling to raise money for diabetes research.

The scene, as it came to him, was set in medieval times: A vaporous, black-cloaked messenger floats into a room at an inn and hands the occupant what appears to be a stone. The "stone," it turns out, is a dragon egg.

"When I first started writing it, I had no idea how long it would go," Cunder said.

He self-published the novel, "The Silver Talon," and is giving proceeds from sales of the book to the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation. Cunder, 17, was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes when he was 18 months old.

"The Silver Talon" is the first installment in the Chronicles of the Renasu Guild, which he expects will be a trilogy.

He started writing the book about a year and a half ago. He had it professionally edited, purchased publication rights to a Spanish artist's image of a dragon for the cover, and self-published the work. He recently found

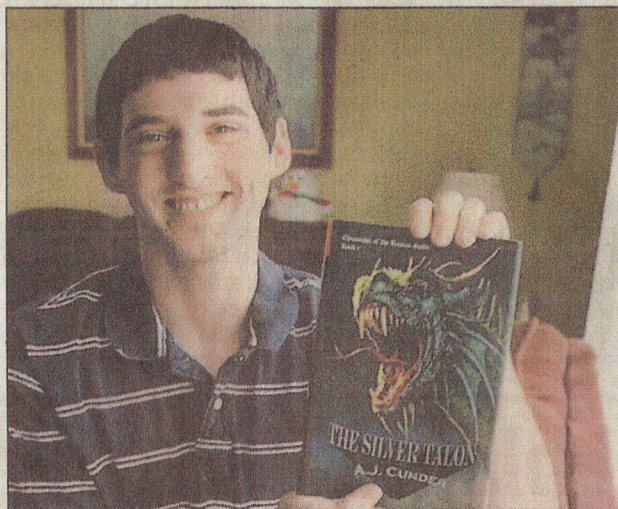
an agent and is seeking a major publisher.

In drafting the novel, Cunder committed to writing at least two pages a day.

"I just went page by page, chapter by chapter," he said. "I put myself in that scene and said, 'What happens next?'"

He brought a notebook to school to jot down ideas. Sometimes, three or four pages of notes would be scrapped entirely. Other times, when he started typing the notes into his computer, they stretched to 15 pages as he fleshed out details and scenes.

Cunder, a volunteer firefighter with the Whippany Fire Department who also has a black belt in Tae Kwon Do, invented a language for the novel, which he said is based on Latin and Italian. There is a glossary at the end of the book, and a hand-drawn map at the beginning.



His Italian teacher at Whippany Park, Susan Holleran, read an early draft of the novel and enjoyed seeing that some of the invented words were based on Italian.

She said the novel is phenomenal.

"As I told him, I can't wait for book No. 2," she said.

Cunder is attending Seton Hall University in the fall, where he plans to major in English. He said Whippany Park language arts teacher Peter Talarico pushed him in that direction of study.

"He is unquestionably an outstanding writer," Talarico said. "He just under-

## IF YOU GO

A.J. Cunder (left) is scheduled to discuss his novel "The Silver Talon" at 7 p.m. June 30 at the Whippanong Library, 1000 Route 10 W. Refreshments will be served. Attendees must preregister by calling 973-428-2460.

For more information about "The Silver Talon" and how to buy it, visit [www.thesilvertalon.com](http://www.thesilvertalon.com).

stands language and words and how to use them probably better than the large majority of students his age. He just has a mind for language like few people I've known. ... I'm looking forward to him becoming a prolific writer."

Cunder said he always has been fascinated with goblins, magic and "anything that's not of this world." He has had sword fights with friends in his backyard,

which helped him write combat scenes in "The Silver Talon," he said. The Inheritance Cycle, a fantasy series written by Christopher Paolini when Paolini was a teenager, is the epitome of good fantasy, Cunder said.

Paolini self-published his first novel, "Eragon," and signed first editions now sell for \$2,000.

Cunder hopes first editions of his novel also will be worth that much some day.

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