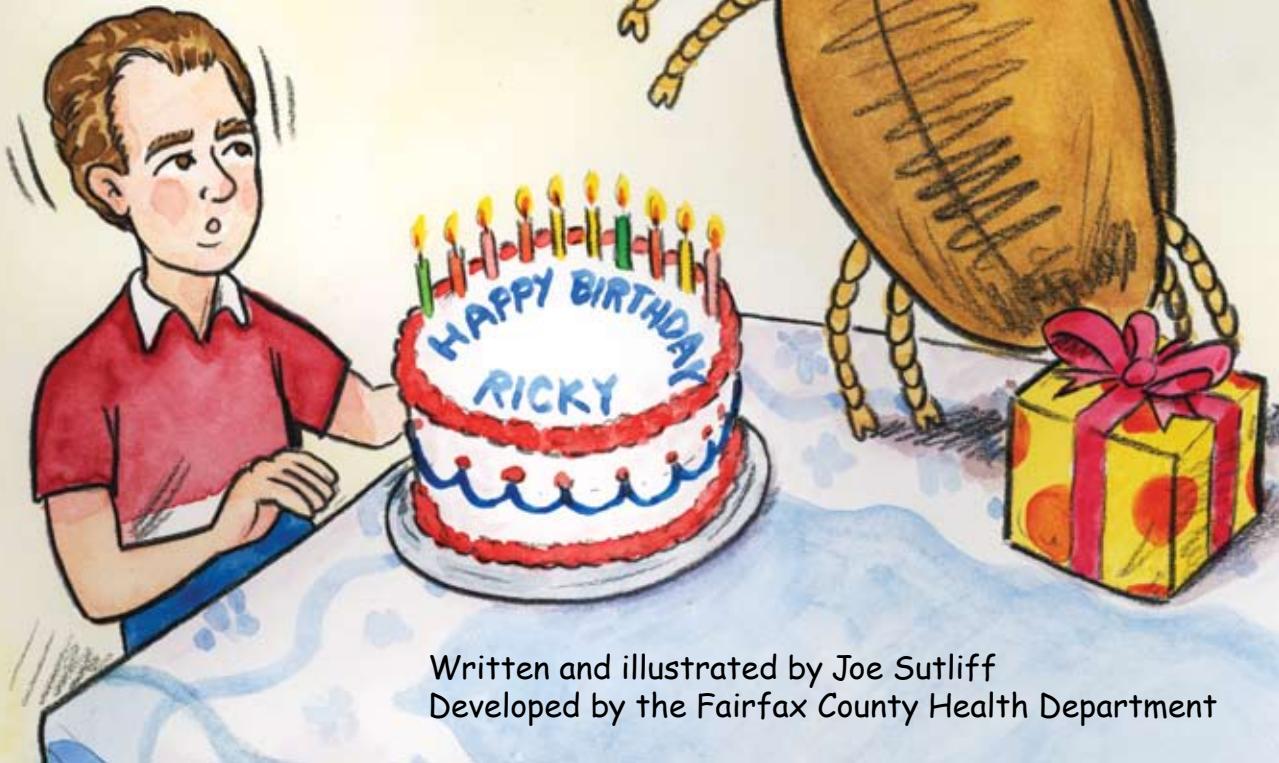


Ricky Beats the Birthday Bites



Written and illustrated by Joe Sutliff
Developed by the Fairfax County Health Department



The Disease Carrying Insects Program (DCIP) was established in 2003 to monitor and control mosquitoes and West Nile virus in Fairfax County. Since then, it has expanded to include ticks and tick-borne diseases. The mission of the program is threefold: vector and disease surveillance, vector management and control as well as community education and outreach activities.

The program's goal is to minimize the impact of mosquito- and tick-borne diseases with an integrated approach to pest management.

DCIP Team

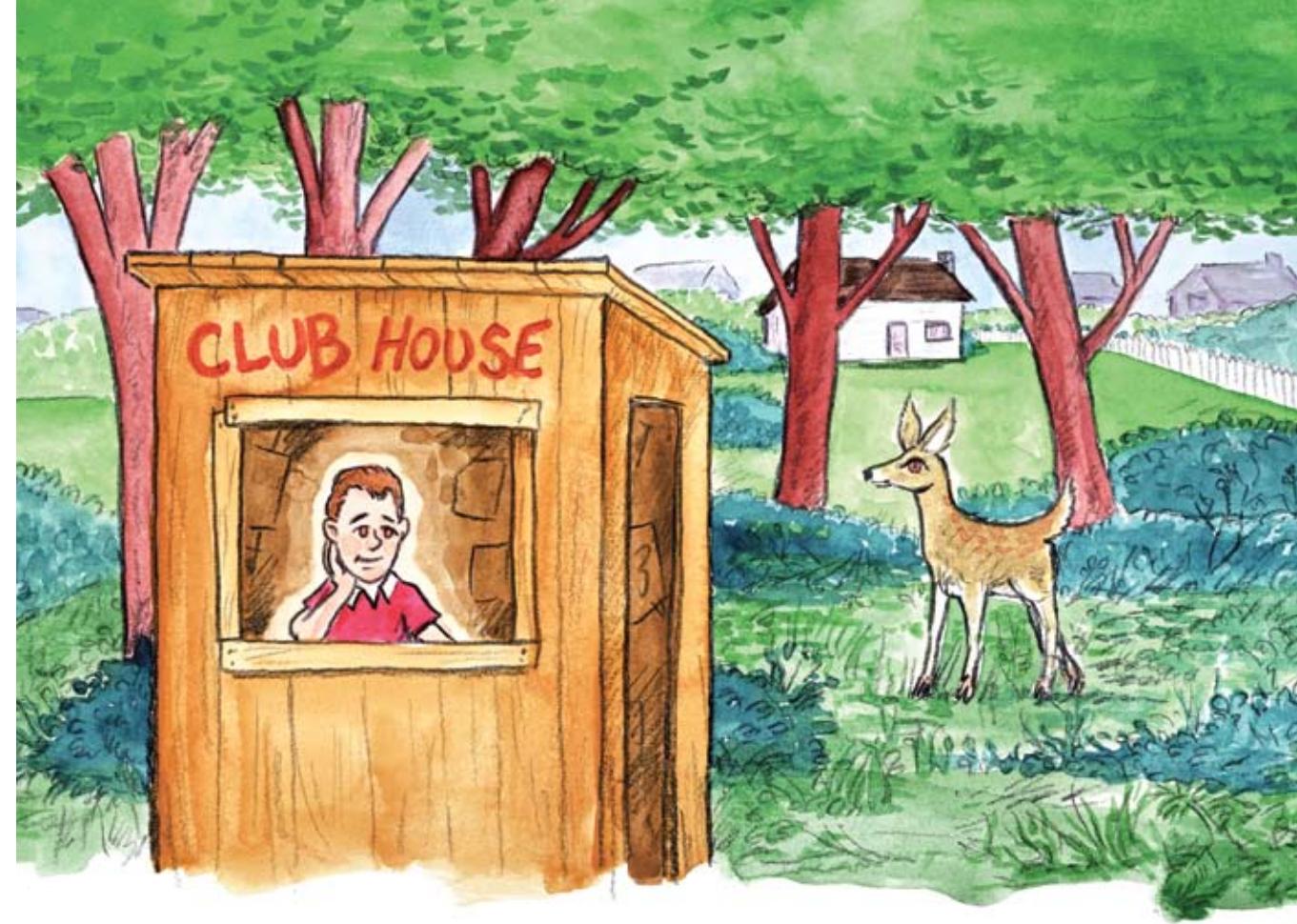
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Ricky was very excited. His friend Laurel was coming over so they could plan his big birthday party. Every year, Ricky invited his friends and family. This year his mom told him that he was old enough to plan the party himself.

This will be the best party ever! he thought. If only Laurel would get here!



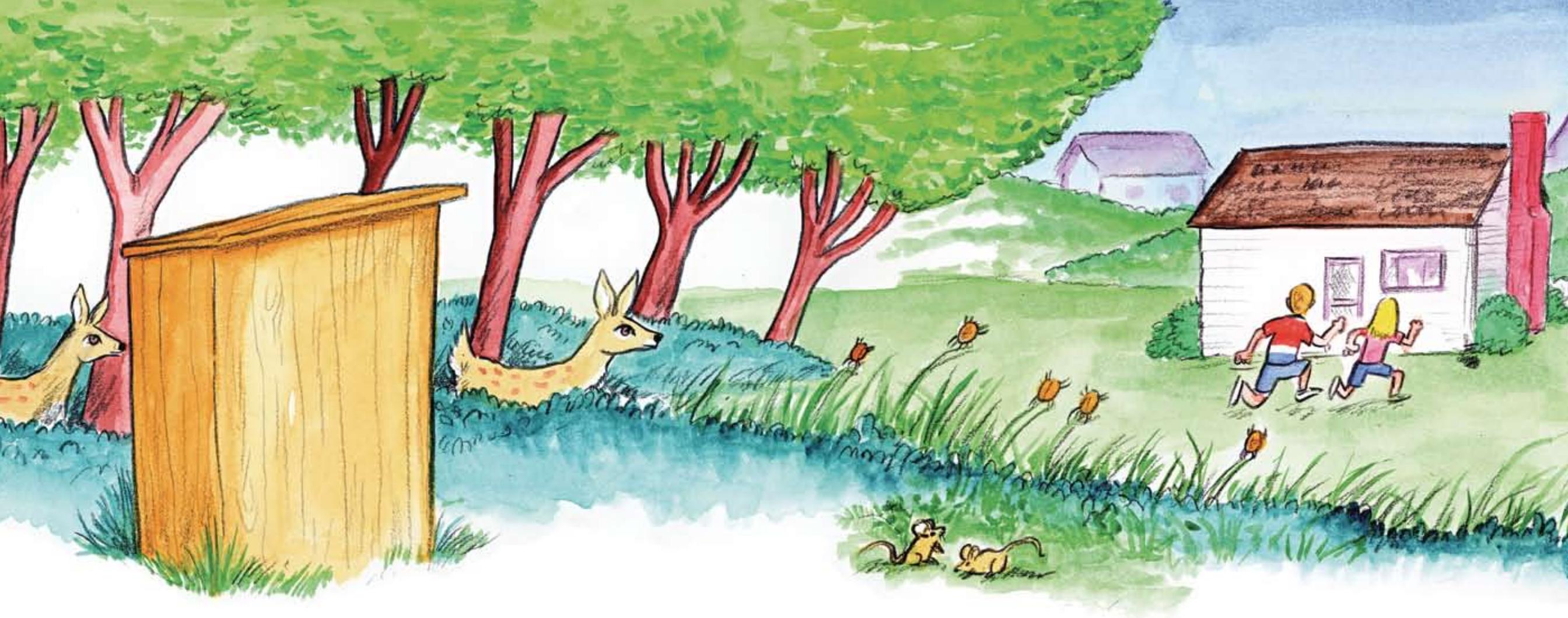
Suddenly a head popped through the door of Ricky's club house. It was Laurel!

"Hi Ricky - I've got lots of ideas for your party. How about dressing



like pirates, or maybe a baseball theme?"

"I was thinking about a circus party with a clown and balloons- or we could have a soccer game!" said Ricky.



The two made a list of all their ideas. The club house was a good place for making plans. Ricky, Laurel and some of their friends built it in the woods behind Ricky's home.

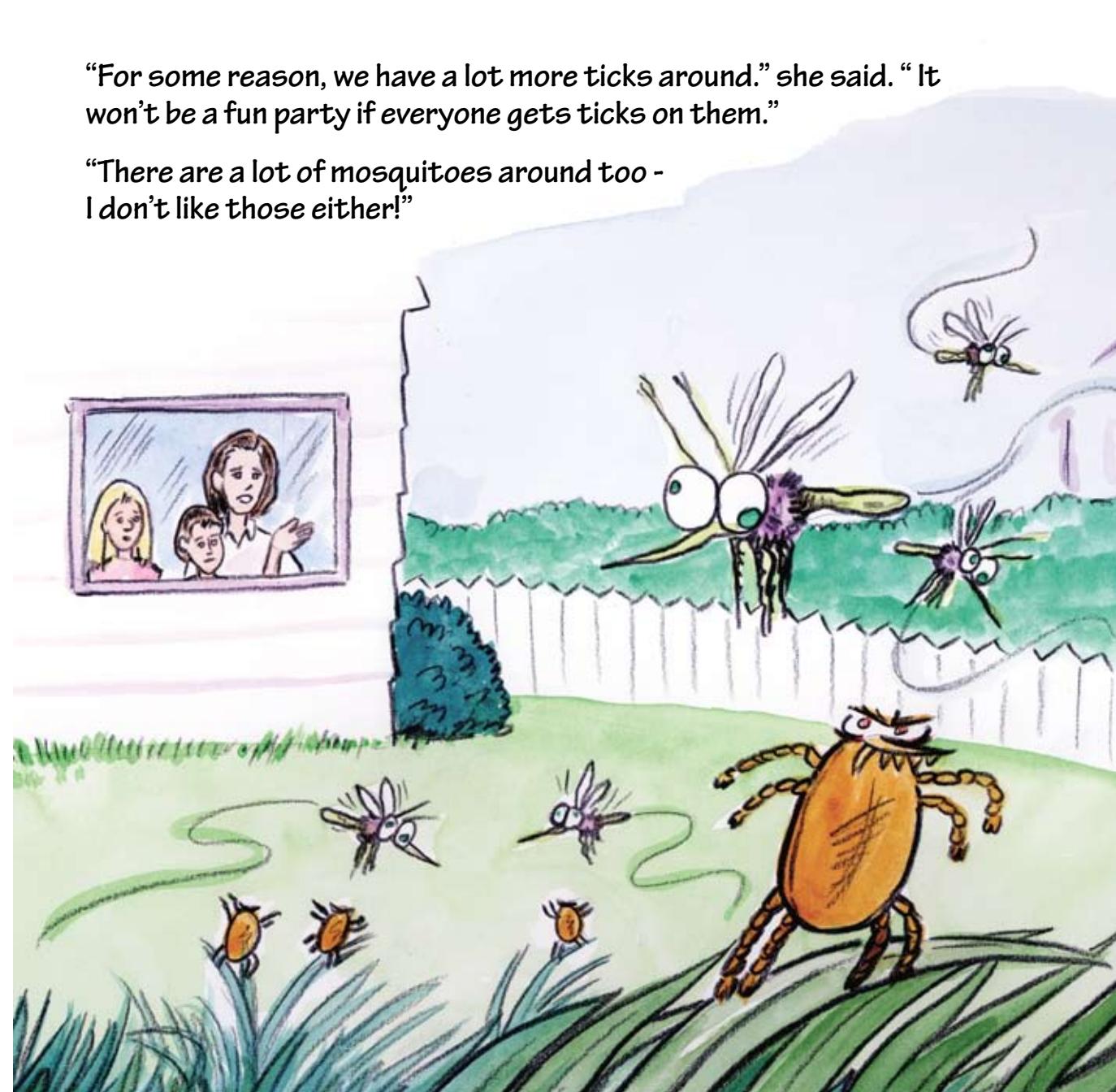
"Okay, let's show these party ideas to my mom!" he said as they ran out of the clubhouse and towards the house.

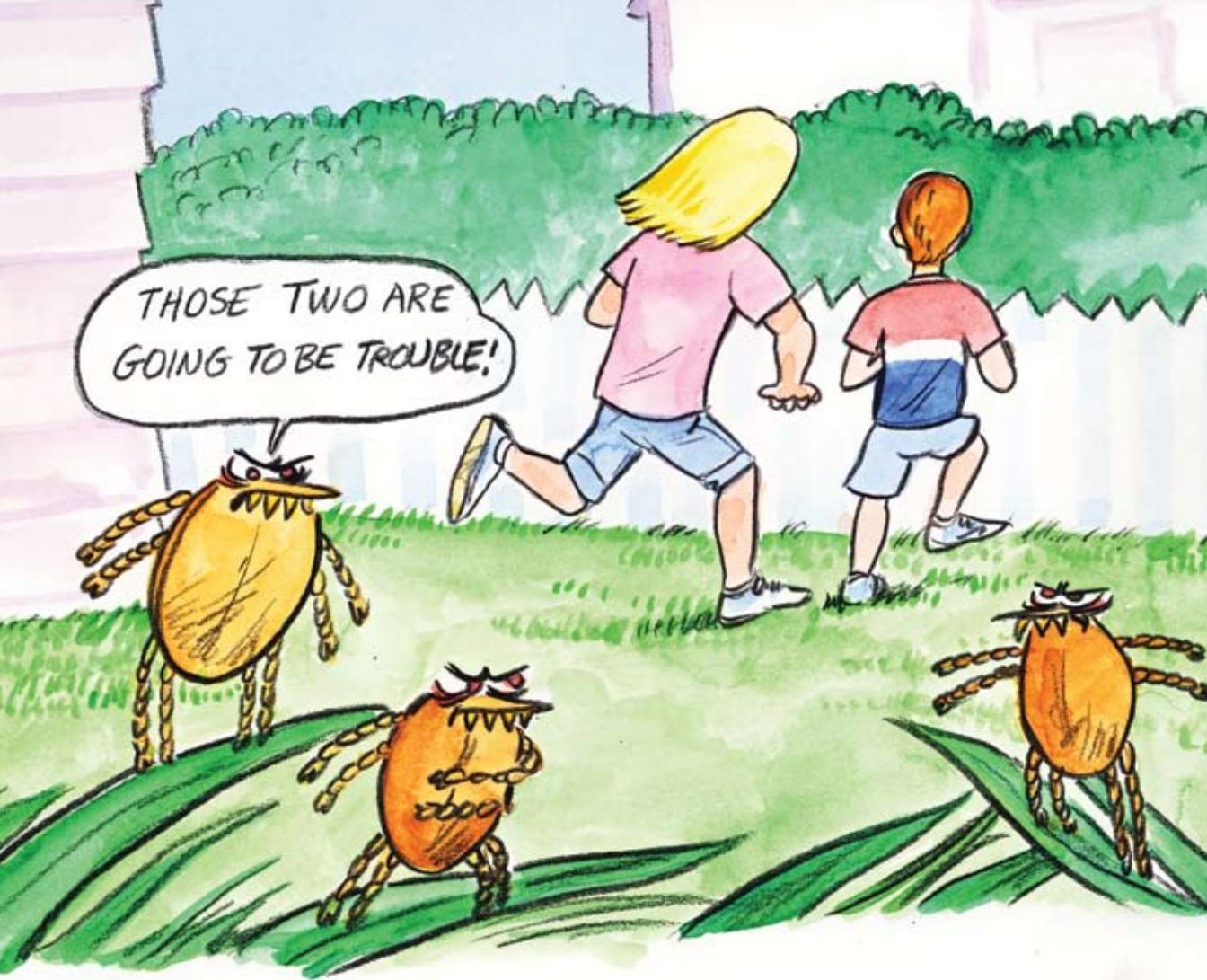


Ricky's mom and little brother Sammy were in the kitchen. Ricky and Laurel started to tell them about their ideas when Ricky's mom stopped them. "What's that on your arm, Ricky?" she asked. She looked closer. "I was afraid of this - it's a tick." She checked them for any more of the nasty pests.

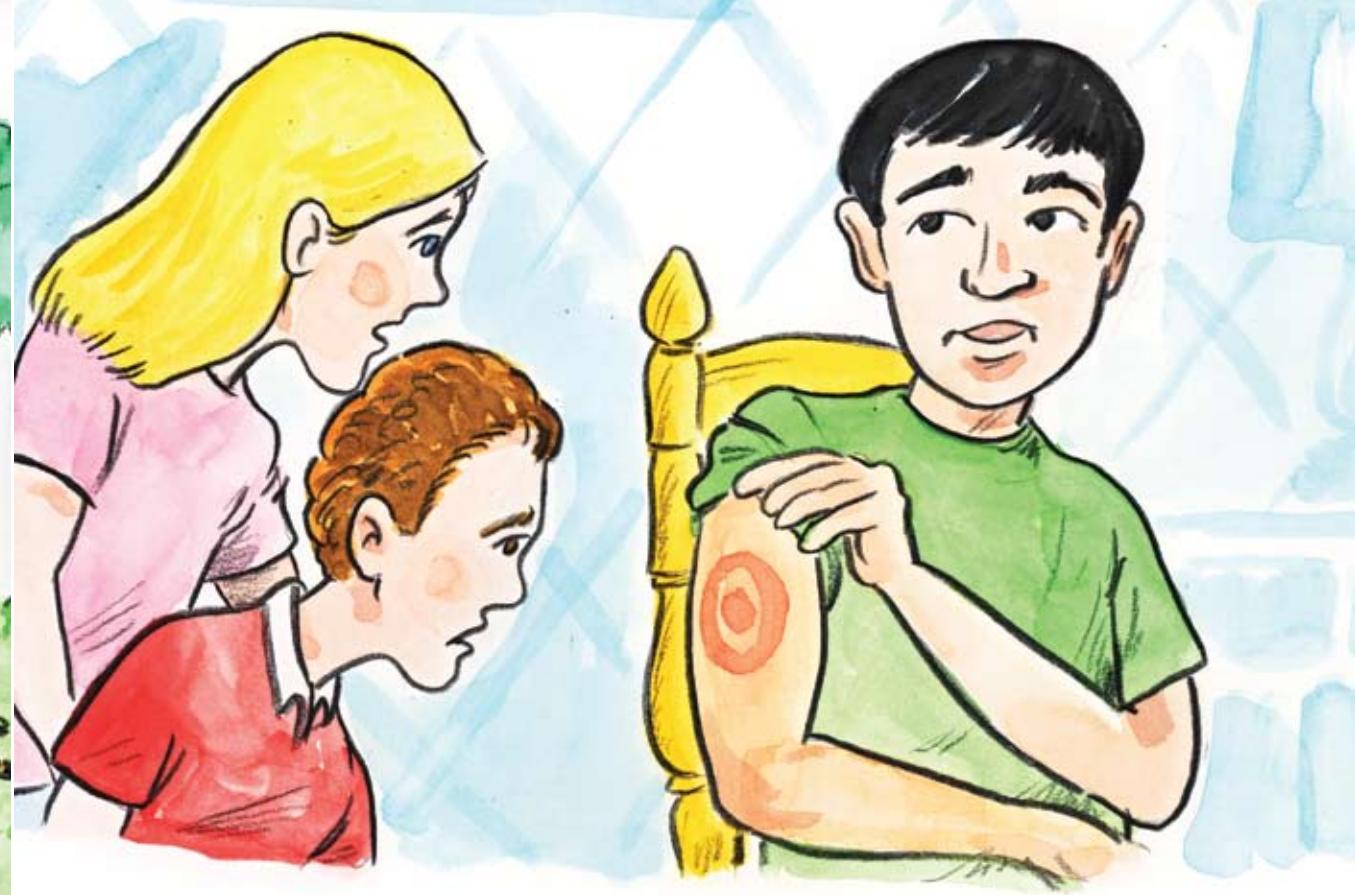
"For some reason, we have a lot more ticks around." she said. "It won't be a fun party if everyone gets ticks on them."

"There are a lot of mosquitoes around too - I don't like those either!"





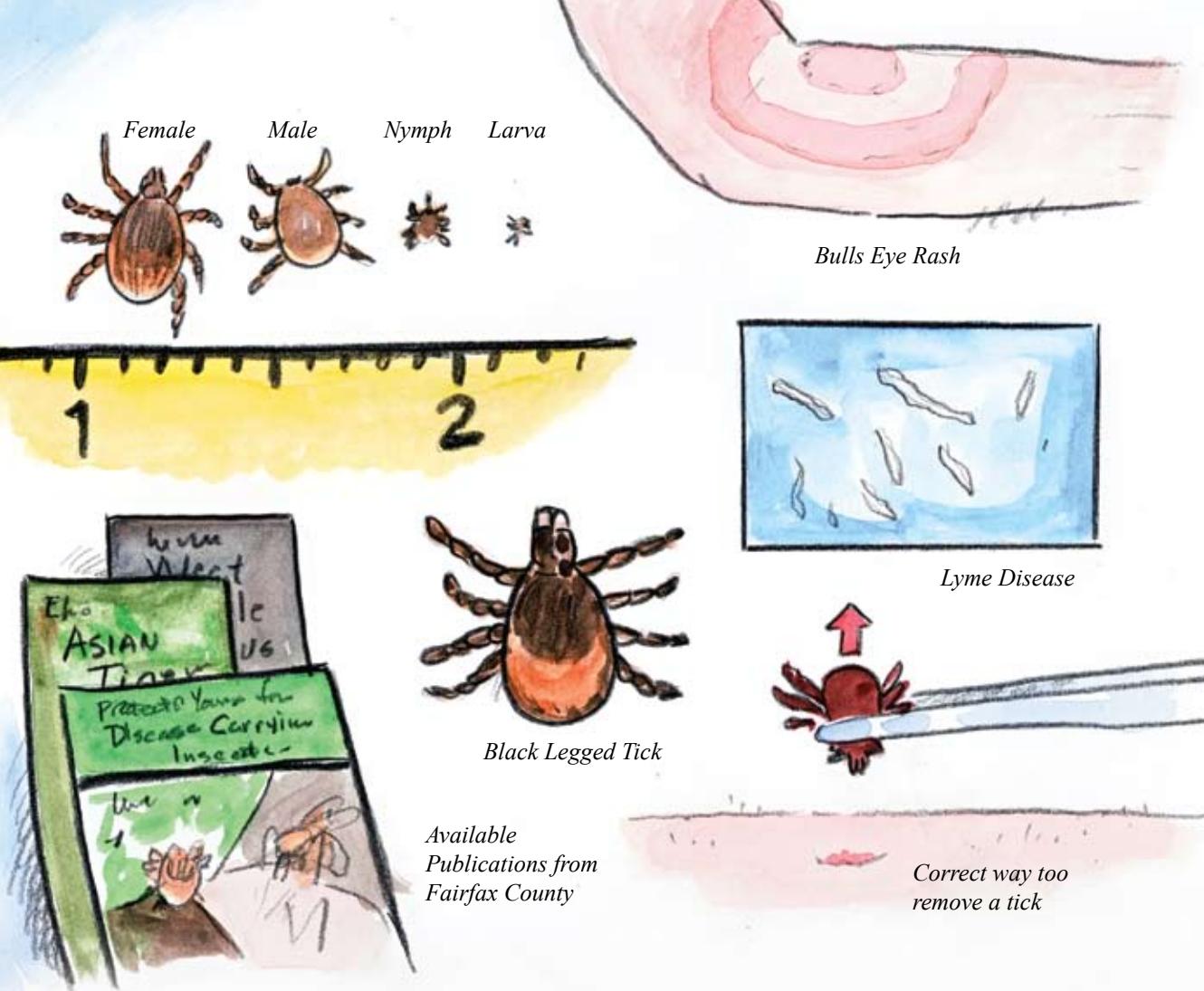
“Hey, has anyone seen Alex? Let’s go tell him about the party!” said Laurel. Alex was their friend and neighbor. He had been home sick for the last week. They ran to Alex’s house.



“Hey Alex, how are you feeling?” asked Ricky.

“I’m pretty tired and have headaches. I am sick with Lyme disease—it’s carried by ticks” Alex said. He showed them a bull-eye shaped rash on his arm.

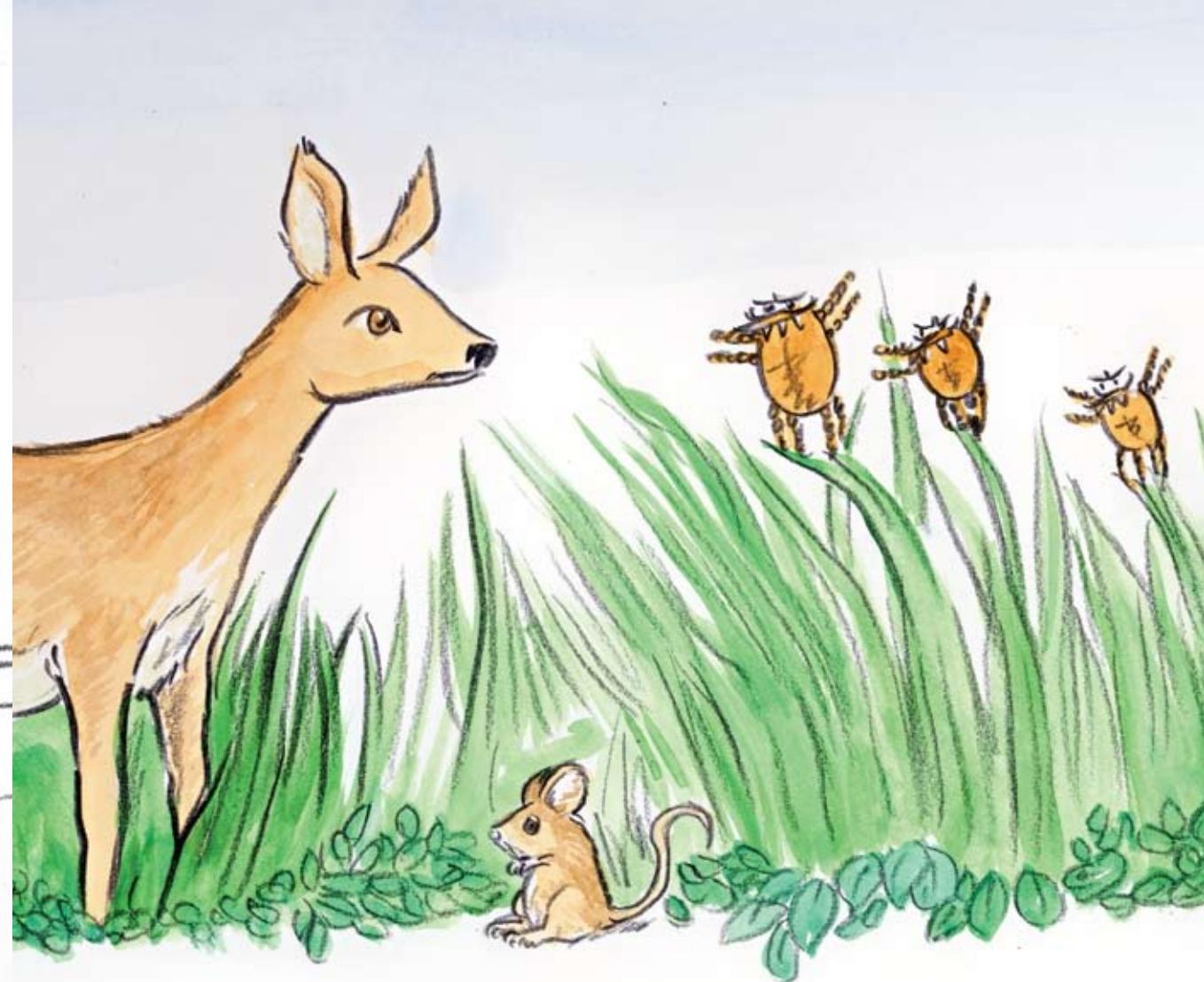
“I’ve been learning all I can about them on my computer,” Alex said. Let me show you. He typed “tick” and then “Fairfax County” in the search window on his computer.



Available Publications from Fairfax County

“Wow! Look at all the information!” said Laurel.

“Let’s print out the tick brochure from the Fairfax County website.” Ricky suggested.



They learned that ticks, mice and deer are all important in the spread of Lyme disease. Ticks wait on long grass and dense brush, grabbing onto animals and people to walk by.



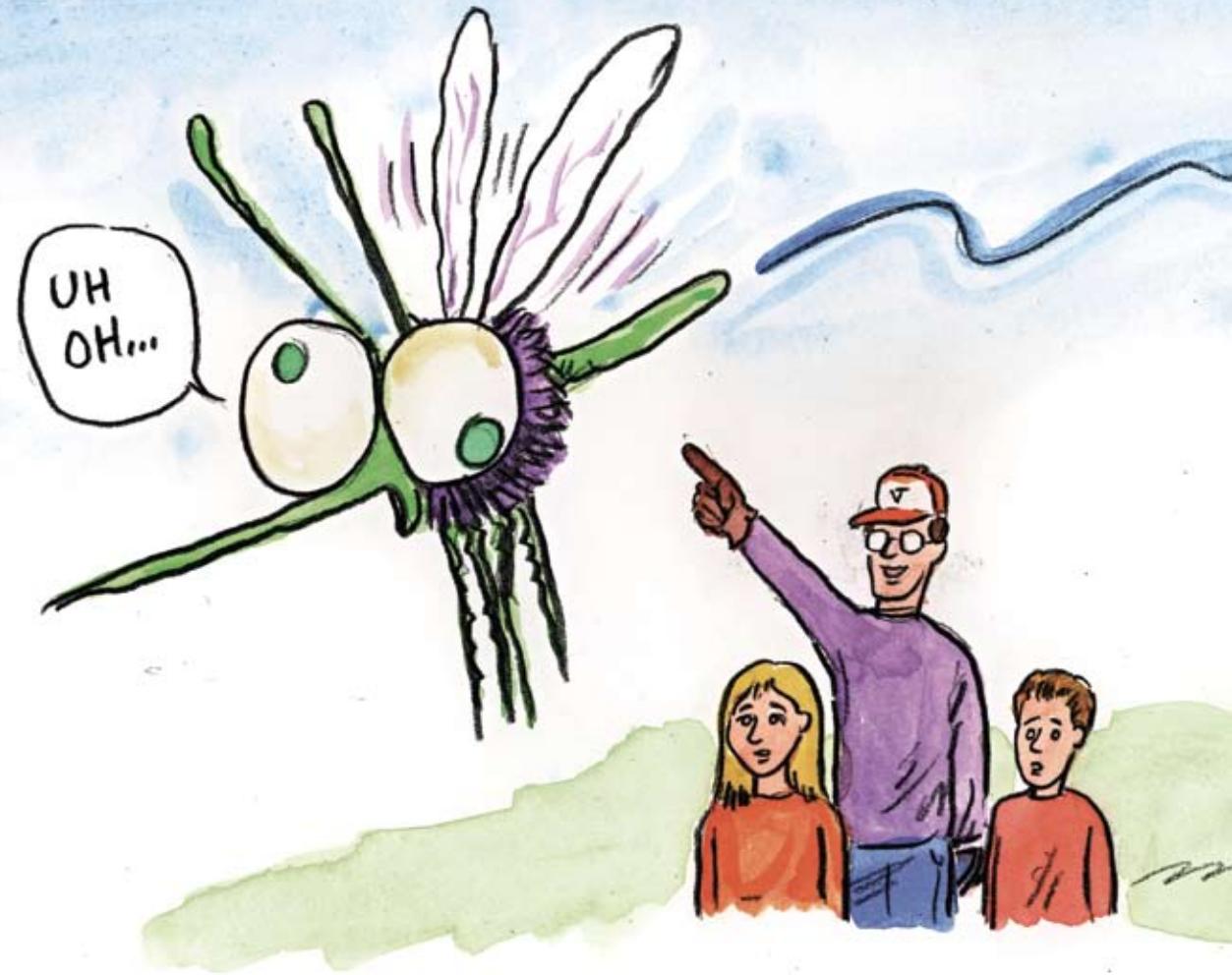
The brochure they printed said they could prevent tick bites by wearing long, light-colored, loose clothing and tucking their pant legs inside their socks. These helpful suggestions make it easier to see ticks so you can remove them.



They then put on bug repellent. They made sure it contained 30 percent DEET because that works the best to keep ticks away.



The brochure also had information on how to keep ticks out of the yard. The kids asked Ricky's Dad to trim the grass and bushes around the yard and they helped clear away the branches and clippings—all places where the ticks like to hide and wait.



"You should make sure there are no mosquitoes for your party either," said Ricky's dad. They all agreed and he showed them some ways to get rid of mosquitoes.



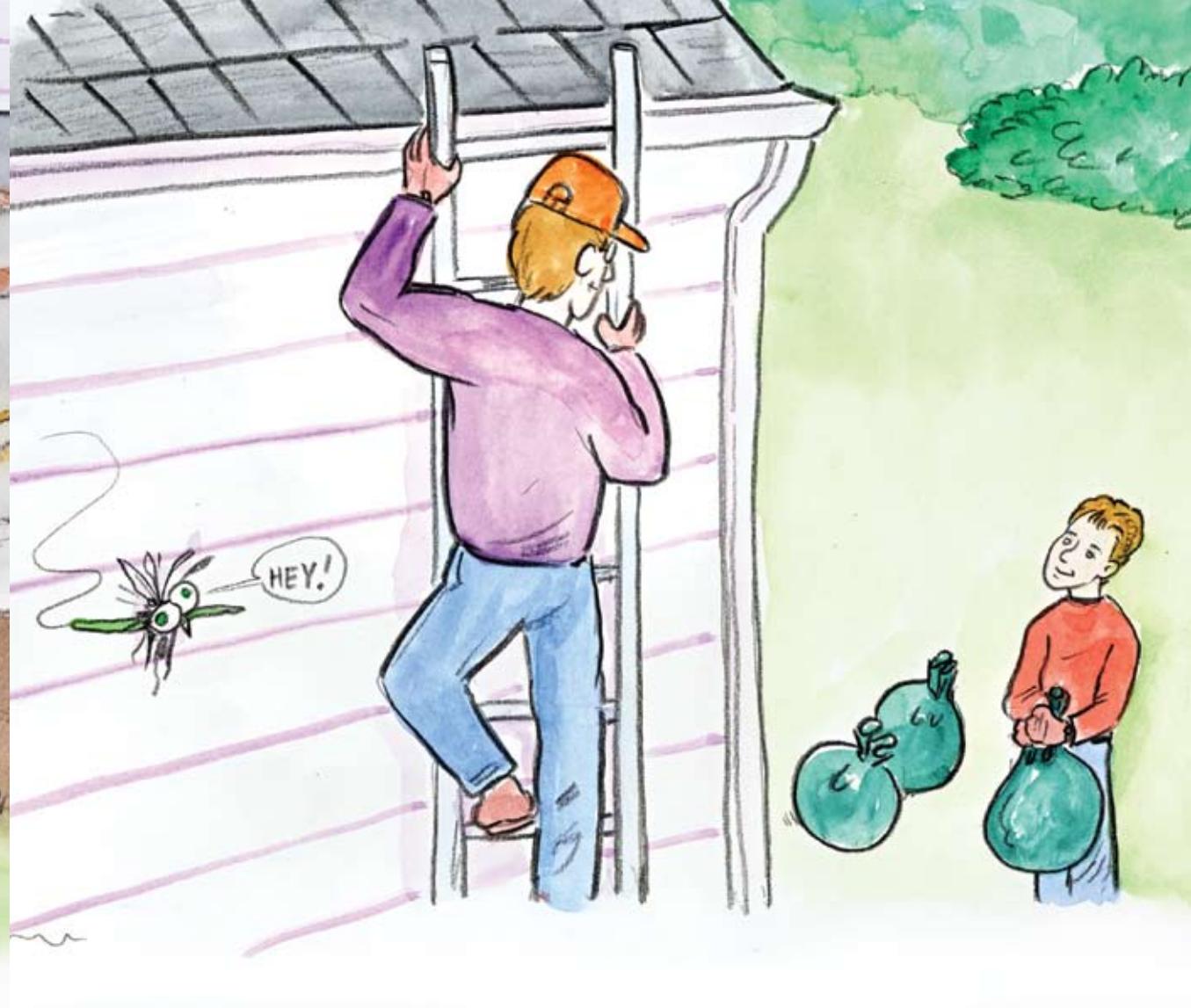
“You see kids, mosquitoes only need a little water to lay their eggs. Look, you can see the larvae swimming around!”



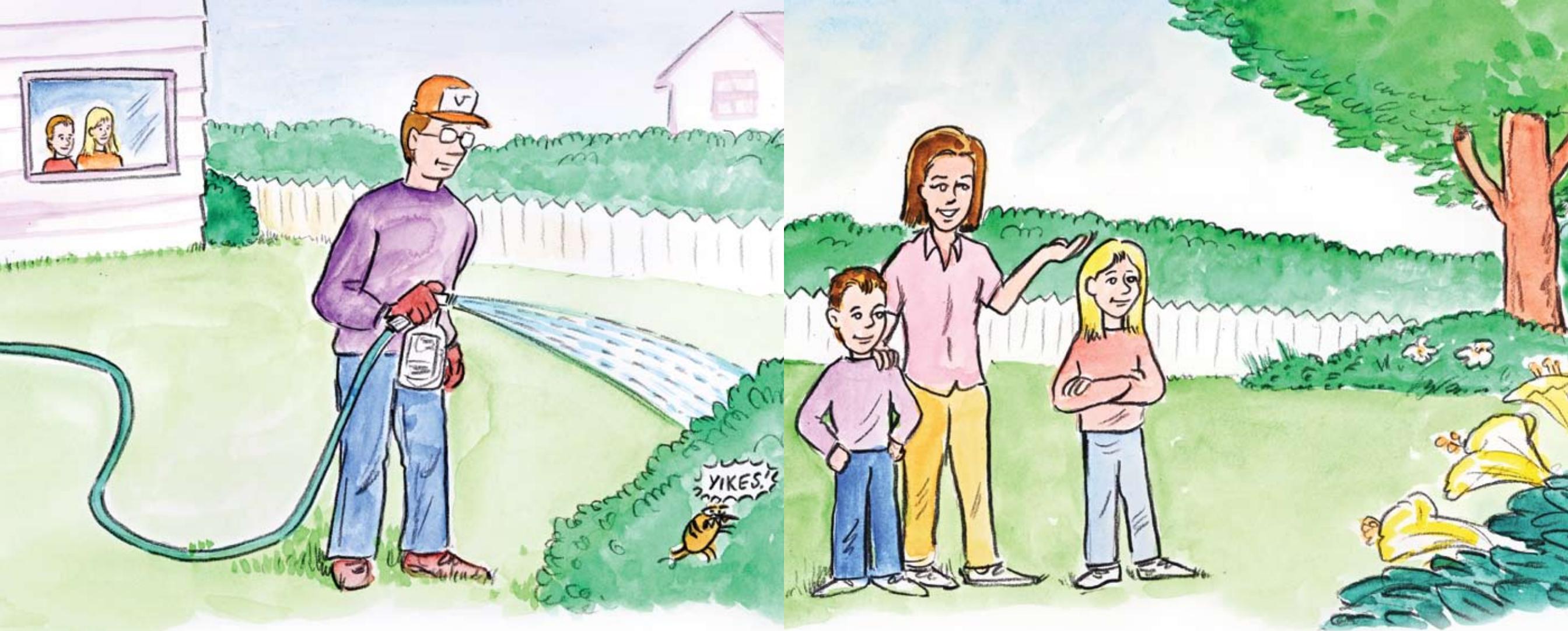
First, Ricky and Laurel cleaned up all the trash they could find. They also emptied Sammy’s pool.



Ricky and Laurel changed the water in the birdbath and emptied the water from all the containers and flower pots and put them away.

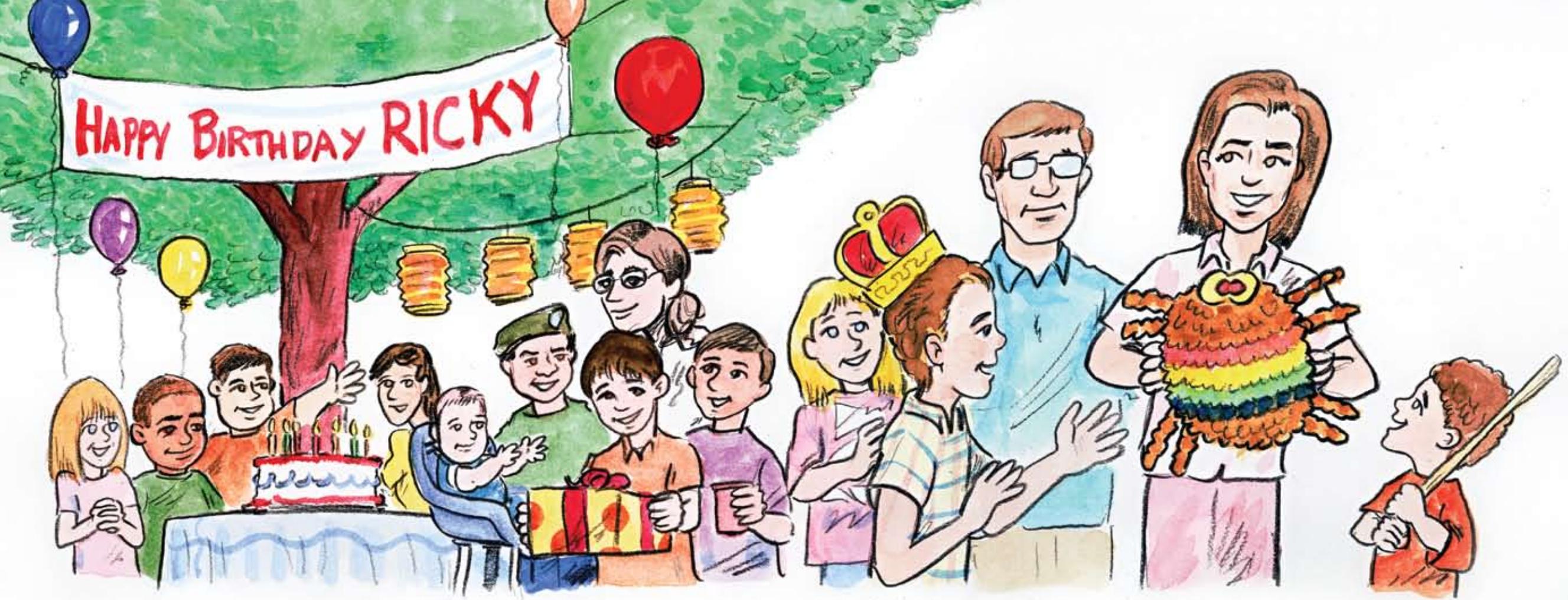


Ricky's dad cleaned out the gutters on their house, and made sure there was no standing water in any of the downspouts or corrugated pipes.



Ricky's dad sprayed the area with permethrin to get rid of ticks. He told them to stay inside while he was spraying, and not to go near the places where he had sprayed for a few hours.

The next day Ricky's mom pronounced their yard mosquito and tick free. "Great work kids!" she said. You and your friends made our neighborhood safer for everyone!"



“When the day of the big party came, all of Ricky’s family and friends were there.

“This is the best party you’ve ever had!” said Laurel happily.

“I’ll say!” answered Ricky. “And there’s not a tick or mosquito anywhere!”

“Wait a minute, kids” said Ricky’s mom. “Here’s one big tick you missed!” She brought out a special piñata that she had made for the party. Sammy rushed up with the piñata stick and everyone laughed.

“Me first!”



THE END



TICK TIP:

Remember the deer and mice near the club house? If you are in an area where there are a lot of deer, you are also probably near a lot of ticks. Ticks like to prey on deer and field mice, so if you see these animals, make extra sure to use repellent and check yourself often!



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