Heavy Hitters Bat for Books

Bat for Books to Benefit Patients at Phoenix Children’s Hospital

Get Excited About History
Step Back in Time with Judith Redline Coopey

First Book Launches Campaign
To Share Magic of Storytelling with Kids in Need

Monster Book Review:
Mary-Ellen O’Keefe’s Word-Speaking Diet

Conrad’s Classroom:
Our Immune System Fights for Us!

Paul and Amy Goldschmidt

Photo credit: Linda F. Radke
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The submission deadline is the 27th of the month for the following month’s issue. There is no fee required to list your news. For event information, please include: official event name and brief description, time, day and date of the event, cost of admission, whether registration is required, event venue and address, publishable phone number and email address and web address, if applicable.

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Monster Message

The bases are loaded, bottom of the ninth. Adrienne Knoblock, co-founder of Dback Nation has a big lead off on first. On second base is Linda F. Radke, president of Five Star Publications, Inc., who is poised to run. Millie Donaldson from the Emily Center of Phoenix Children’s Hospital (PCH) has taken a few steps off third. At the plate, Arizona Diamondbacks All-Star Paul Goldschmidt is up to bat. The pitch is a meatball, thrown down the heart of the plate and Goldy swings. SMACK! Right on the sweet spot, and the ball sails over the left-field wall. It’s a grand slam for the win! These heavy hitters have stepped up to the plate to support the young patients at Phoenix Children’s Hospital. Read all about it inside and find out how you can help, too!

Also in this issue, we meet author and historian Judith Redline Coopey, who transports her readers to another time and place where they find themselves suddenly engaged in life long ago. Our super science and nature editor Conrad J. Storad tells us all about our immune systems, First Book launches a “magical” campaign, and this month’s book review tells the story of a very special little girl who loves to talk, sing and ask questions. That is, until her first day of school...
Supplied entirely by donations, the Emily Center Book Cart Program at Phoenix Children’s Hospital (PCH) began in 2009, distributing free books to children staying in the hospital. The Book Cart promotes literacy among the young patients and encourages parents to read to their children during their stay. While the volunteers hand out books, they let parents know about Emily Center and what it offers to families—a health library with information on any pediatric topic.
The Book Carts deliver to different floors of the hospital six days a week. In this way, patients on each floor get new books once a week. The carts carry an assortment of reading materials for children of all ages, including board books, picture books, books on science and social studies topics, books for teens and coloring books with crayons. Emily Center Library Services Supervisor Millie Donaldson organizes the program. “We not only give books to the patients,” she explains, “but if their siblings are visiting in the room, we give books to them, also.” Children in the surgical waiting area receive books from the cart as well. According to Donaldson, the Emily Center hands out about 1,000 books per month.

This need for new books caught the attention of Adrienne Knoblock and Lorna Brown, who helped form DBack Nation in 2012, an organization comprised of baseball fans dedicated to encouraging positive support for their beloved Arizona Diamondbacks team. “Our mission was to unite fans so that we could watch games together and create a louder voice for our team and at the same time, raise money for charities that our players support,” explains Knoblock. Part of the way Dback Nation raises money for donations is by collecting promotional items, getting them autographed by the players and auctioning off the memorabilia on Twitter. “The running joke is that I don’t sit down until the third inning to watch the game because I’m walking miles inside Chase Field, dropping off items people have purchased or won by participating in our contests and picking up items that people want to donate.”

In December 2014, members of DBack Nation decided to add PCH to their charity outreach. The Diamondbacks’ First Baseman Paul Goldschmidt and his wife Amy have been volunteering at PCH since 2011. “When we first moved to Phoenix, we wanted to get involved in the community and volunteer to help others,” Amy says. “While searching for a way to get involved, we were introduced to all the great things going on at PCH to help both patients and their families.” And so, the Goldschmidts decided to volunteer. “There are a ton of great programs going on at the hospital to help the kids and families going through some really tough times,” Paul explains. “We try to help out in any way possible and are happy to partner with Dback Nation and give back to PCH.” When the Goldschmidts visit the hospital, Paul wears his Diamondbacks jersey, and they spend time with patients in a variety of ways—reading books, playing video or board games, or just hanging out with families.

“Paul and Amy have always done fundraisers with the Diamondbacks that have raised a huge amount of money,” says Knoblock. This connection between Dback Nation, the Goldschmidts and PCH gave her an idea, but she had one more player to recruit: her friend Linda Radke, president of Five Star Publications, Inc. “Watching Linda contribute to so many great causes got me thinking that we could all work together to benefit the children at PCH,” Knoblock explains. Radke was immediately on board. “I was fortunate to meet with Millie Donaldson at Phoenix Children’s Hospital along with Paul and Amy,” Radke explains. “When I saw the wonderful way that the staff tries to make the days a little brighter for these young patients, I was very touched. I can’t think of a better place to partner with than PCH.” Next, Dback Nation approached Amy Goldschmidt with the game plan. “We try to help out in any way possible,” says Amy, “and when this opportunity came up it sounded like a great way to give back.”

Just before Christmas, $20,000 worth of books were delivered to the Emily Center at PCH. But the season isn’t over—the need for new books is year-round and the team is looking for more players to step up to the plate. The Goldschmidts say that it is great to be a part of a group that wants to positively impact their community, and Donaldson is delighted about the contributions, which will bring happiness and fun to the children during their PCH stay. “To have a partnership with somebody who is really committed and wanting to donate books to the Book Cart … we are thrilled.”

Donations can be made in a number of ways. Through the Dback Nation website (www.dbacknation.com), baseball fans can purchase auctioned sports
memorabilia, and proceeds from select items on the auctions page will be used to benefit the PCH Book Cart Program. People can also make monetary donations through the Five Star Literacy Foundation (www.fivestarliteracyfoundation.org), and those contributions will be used to purchase Five Star books at a considerable discount, which will then be donated to the Emily Center. “Books by Five Star Publications will be great for the kids, and they will help them with their struggles,” Amy explains. “The stories are colorful and fun and we know the patients, families, and everyone else at the hospital will really enjoy them.” Children at PCH are already enjoying the first donation of Five Star books. “The stories are great, and the kids love them,” Donaldson says. “They like the bright, colorful pictures.”

Books can also be donated directly to the program through the Emily Center. However, Donaldson stresses that the books must be brand new in order to give them to patients, many of whom have compromised immune systems. “We are so appreciative of any type of donations that we get for the Book Cart,” Donaldson says. “It’s a very popular program that we have here at the Emily Center, and it just brings a lot of joy to the children.”

Dback Nation and Five Star

For more information about Dback Nation or to make a donation, please contact:

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Get Excited About History
Step Back in Time with Judith Redline Coopey

by Rachel Koestler-Grack

Most high school students—as well as a fair share of adults—might be reluctant to describe history as “exciting.” But the thrill of things past is what fuels Judith Redline Coopey’s historical fiction novels.

“I get excited about a topic and doing research,” she explains, “and the story just flows.” Much more than mere snapshots of the past, her stories transport readers to another time and place, where they find themselves suddenly engaged in life long ago, which is an undeniably exciting experience.

Coopey grew up in Fox Hollow, Pennsylvania, where she started writing at age 11. As a child, she wrote mostly stories and plays but boldly announced to her teacher that she would write books someday. When she was a junior in high school, she wrote an essay titled “What America Means to Me.” Her principal was so impressed with her composition that he submitted it to Student Life Magazine, and Coopey became a published author.

After graduation, Coopey attended Pennsylvania State University on a scholarship. Despite her passion for writing, she pursued a career in education. “Writing seemed like such an iffy prospect,” she says. “So I became a teacher—history was the only logical choice—and set out to seek my fortune.” After she married, Coopey moved to Arizona. Because her husband was in the Army, they moved several times, spending 15 years in Wisconsin and two years in Germany. In 1984, they returned to Arizona and Coopey earned her master’s degree in secondary education with an emphasis on history from Arizona State University.

Although her time was divided between teaching ninth-grade world history and raising a family, Coopey found ways to kindle her love for writing—an essay here, an article there. Over the years, her pieces were featured in publications such as Wisconsin Trails and Scholastic News, and she also wrote Herkimers, Holsteins and Cheese: A Brief History of Bear Valley, Wisconsin. On occasion, Coopey attended writing conferences, where she earned honors. “All part of learning to believe in myself,” she says.

After she retired from teaching in 2004, Coopey felt it was time to “go home” and revisit the passion that had burned in her since childhood. “I decided it was now or never,” she recalls. “I decided to write.” Given her background, the genre of historical fiction seemed logical. Choosing a setting for her novels felt just as natural. She returned home in another sense—
writing stories about Pennsylvania, especially the area where she grew up. "It’s funny what makes you write about a place," Coopey says, admitting she can’t just set her mind to write novels about Wisconsin or some other state. Someday, she may decide to write about someplace else, but for now, her stories are rooted in her Pennsylvania homeland.

Coopey had been actively involved in researching her family’s genealogy for years. During her research, she learned that some of her ancestors were Quakers, and the old house in which they lived was still standing. The current owner told her the house had once been a stop on the Underground Railroad. While she didn’t have documentation to confirm the claim, there was proof that Quakers in the area had offered their homes as safe houses for escaped slaves. "I like to hope my people were involved," says Coopey, "but I don’t know that for sure." Nevertheless, the rumor sparked Coopey’s curiosity. Wanting to learn more, she read close to 30 books on the Underground Railroad, all the while thinking about her family history. Somewhere in the midst of all that research, a story took shape and eventually became *Redfield Farm*, a novel about the Quakers of Bedford County, Pennsylvania and their efforts to help fugitive slaves find freedom.

With more than 57,000 copies purchased, *Redfield Farm* is her best-selling novel to date. As an unknown, self-published writer, she took her first novel back home and launched it in Bedford County, where the story was set. The local community loved it and bought copies as fast as she could print them. “From there, it was simply word of mouth,” she explains. *Redfield Farm* was honored as a One Book, One Community selection in Amesbury, Massachusetts in 2012 and in Amsterdam, New York in 2014. “I was thrilled at the news,” Coopey says. She traveled to both cities and talked to locals about the book. “It was a great experience.”

After *Redfield Farm*, Coopey wrote *Waterproof*, a story that emerged from the Johnstown Flood, which devastated an entire Pennsylvania town in 1889. “How do people get over something like that,” she wondered. “And do they ever, really?” This question fueled her writing. Next, she published *Looking for Jane*, a quest novel about a disabled orphan girl who goes in search of her mother, who she believes is gun-slinging Calamity Jane.

Coopey’s latest novel, *The Furnace*, is the first volume of the *Juniata Iron Trilogy*. Enticed to write a family saga, she set this story on an iron plantation in the Juniata River Valley near her childhood home. She knew the place, or what is left of it today—the furnace, the mayor house and several tenement houses. “When you grow up near something like that, you don’t pay attention to what it’s about,” she explains. “As a writer of Pennsylvania history, I started to think about that place, and I thought, ‘One hundred and fifty years ago, that was a going place, that must have been an amazing thing.’” The trilogy covers several generations, and she hopes to release volume two in the fall of 2015.

Combined, Judith Redline Coopey has sold over 70,000 copies of her books. “It’s just incredible,” she says. Of *Redfield Farm*, she admits, “I have absolutely no idea how or why that book became a bestseller.” Still, she might have a clue as to the reason. She says, “People were very excited about it.” And after all, each story she writes grows out of her enthusiasm for history, a contagious excitement she shares with her readers. “History is exciting because it is our story,” she explains. “It tells us who we are and how we got here. It’s about people dealing with the challenges of their lives.” Just like her stories prove, "History is not about dates and names … it’s about people.”

Judith Redline Coopey

While living in Wisconsin, Coopey founded Lone Rock Community Library. The library continues to serve the Village of Lone Rock to this day.

To learn more about Judith Redline Coopey visit her website at: www.JudithRedlineCoopey.com.
First Book Launches Campaign to Share Magic of Storytelling With Kids in Need

The nonprofit social enterprise First Book announced a campaign, launched in collaboration with Disney | ABC Television Group and Disney Publishing Worldwide (DPW), that will put up to 1 million brand-new books into the hands of kids in need. The campaign, which focuses on the power of great stories, runs through March 31, 2015.

As part of their ongoing citizenship efforts, Disney | ABC Television Group supports First Book’s mission of providing new books to children from low-income families. The effort will highlight First Book’s work in a robust media campaign, which includes a public service announcement (PSA), on-air segments, and celebrity and public engagement opportunities.

The public service announcement titled, “The Magic of Storytelling,” launched on January 20 and will appear through the end of March on all of Disney | ABC Television Group’s eight owned television stations, various ABC affiliate stations, ABC Network, ABC Family, Disney Channel, Disney XD, Disney Junior, Disney Cruise Line and Resort TVs, the ABC Watch app, New York digital super signs and in New York taxis. The PSA will air as a radio spot on Radio Disney and ABC News Radio. It can also be seen at www.firstbook.org/beinspired.

The public will have the opportunity to share the magic of storytelling with children by making a donation to First Book. For every $5 donated, Disney Publishing Worldwide will provide two books to First Book. The public is also invited to share “speed read” videos of themselves reading as many words as possible in 10 seconds on social media using the hashtag #MagicOfStorytelling.

“The Disney ABC family is a longtime supporter of First Book and has advanced our work in critical ways: from financial support, to contributions of their wonderful books, to strategic guidance as we’ve worked together to deepen our impact,” said Kyle Zimmer, president and CEO of First Book. “We are thrilled to launch the #MagicOfStorytelling campaign to provide more books to children in need with support from Disney.”

First Book is a nonprofit social enterprise that has distributed more than 125 million books and educational resources to programs and schools serving children from low-income families through the United States and Canada. By making new, high-quality books available on an ongoing basis, First Book is transforming the lives of children in need and elevating the quality of education. For more information, visit firstbook.org or follow the latest news on Facebook and Twitter.

Disney Publishing Worldwide is the world’s largest publisher of children’s books and magazines with over 700 million products sold each year. DPW consists of an extensive worldwide licensing structure as well as vertically integrated publishing imprints, including Disney Book Group in the U.S. and Disney Libri in Italy. DPW publishes a range of children’s magazines globally, as well as Disney kids magazines in the U.S. Disney English is DPW’s English language learning business, which includes Disney English learning centers in China and a worldwide retail-licensing program. DPW’s digital products include bestselling eBook titles as well as original apps. Headquartered in Glendale, California, DPW publishes books, magazines and digital products in 85 countries in 75 languages.

The Disney/ABC Television Group is comprised of The Walt Disney Company’s (NYSE: DIS) global entertainment and news television properties, cable networks, owned television stations, and radio stations. This includes ABC Entertainment Group, ABC News, ABC Owned Television Stations, Disney Channels Worldwide, and ABC Family, as well as Disney/ABC Domestic Television and Disney Media Distribution.
The American Library Association (ALA) recently announced the top books, video and audio books for children and young adults—including the Caldecott, Coretta Scott King, Newbery and Printz awards—at its Midwinter Meeting in Chicago.

The list of 2015 award winners includes:

**John Newbery Medal for the most outstanding contribution to children’s literature**


**Randolph Caldecott Medal for the most distinguished American picture book for children**

*The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend*, illustrated by Dan Santat, is the 2015 Caldecott Medal winner. The book was written by Dan Santat and published by Little, Brown and Company, a division of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

**Coretta Scott King (Author) Book Award**

*Brown Girl Dreaming*, written by Jacqueline Woodson, is the King Author Book winner. The book is published by Nancy Paulsen Books, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA) LLC.

**Coretta Scott King (Illustrator) Book Award**

*Firebird*, illustrated by Christopher Myers, is the King Illustrator Book winner. The book was written by Misty Copeland and published by G. P. Putnam’s Sons, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA) LLC.

**Michael L. Printz Award for excellence in literature written for young adults**


**Schneider Family Book Award for books that embody an artistic expression of the disability experience**


Recognized worldwide for the high quality they represent, ALA awards guide parents, educators, librarians and others in selecting the best materials for youths. For the complete list of winners including honors, please visit www.ala.org/yma.
Wash your hands. Drink plenty of fluids. Get a good night’s sleep. Eat your veggies and fruit. Exercise regularly. All are good habits to follow during the middle of cold and flu season. But even the healthiest among us will get sick once in a while. With trillions and trillions of viruses and bacteria filling the world around us, what’s a human to do?

Never fear. Do not fret. The human body is an amazing creation. Each and every one of us has our very own internal defense system. This amazing system is built to fight against the nasty microbes that would do us harm and make us sick. It works very, very well … most of the time.

The human body has the ability to recognize millions of different enemies. Our built-in “defense force” is called the immune system. Different parts of the system can produce cells and powerful chemicals called cytokines. These cells and cytokines match up with and destroy bacteria, viruses and other invaders. Millions and millions of immune system cells are organized into sets and subsets. These groups of cells pass information back and forth.

The chemical substances produced by these cells function as an internal alarm system. Their message is simple: “Germs are here. Kill them.”

The immune system does much more than simply protect us from infection. It can tell the difference between the body’s own cells and those belonging to invaders. Immune system cells can tell the difference between “self” and “non-self.”

Each and every cell in our body carries special marker molecules. These markers are also called antigens. They advertise “self.” Think of a typical cell as being an orange covered with knobby toothpicks and colorful little marker flags.

On a real cell, these toothpicks and flags are bits of protein and other special molecules. One or more of these bits of protein tell the immune system’s hunter and killer cells that everything is fine. The alarm sounds when immune defenders come across a cell or microbe that has no “self” marker. The system swings into action to meet the threat of disease. Immune system cells can remember past fights with disease-causing viruses and bacteria. The system keeps a chemical record of how it recognizes each invader. This is one library we want to keep up to date.
These special protein molecules are called antibodies. Antibodies are Y-shaped molecules. They fit a specific antigen much like a key fits into a lock. Any cell or organism that triggers the immune system into action is called an antigen (and is usually a non-self antigen). Antigens can be germs such as a virus or bacterium. Or they can be bits and pieces of those germs.

Antibodies lock onto an antigen. They serve as the flag that marks the invader for destruction. Later, when a similar microbe invades again, the body recognizes it as an invader. The immune system cranks into action. The goal is to destroy the invading antigen or microbe before it can develop into a new infection.

This is why most people get chicken pox or other childhood diseases only once. The immune system fought the fight once against these invading germs.

Vaccines work the same way. They expose your body to pieces or weakened versions of the germs, and your body learns to fight them off. Vaccines for measles and mumps help children avoid getting the disease at all. Your body keeps a chemical record and protects you from contracting those illnesses.

Keep washing your hands. Drink plenty of fluids. Exercise, sleep well and eat those fruits and veggies. We can get into big trouble when our immune system is not working well. But that is another story for another time.

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**Resources to learn more about the human immune system:**

**WEBSITES:**

- Microbes: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly
  http://askabiologist.asu.edu/microbes
- Ask a Biologist – Arizona State University
  http://askabiologist.asu.edu
- Chain Reaction Magazine – Arizona State University
  http://chainreactionkids.org/stories-special-delivery
- Kids’ Health – Immune System
  http://kidshealth.org
- Immune System – Human Organ Systems for Kids
  www.makemegenius.com

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**Featured Business**

“One upon a time...” These four words have captivated conceptual photographer and digital artist Söndra Nell Rymer since she was a little girl. She has worked in book and curriculum publishing for 20 years and continues her love of the arts, providing cover and inside art for children’s picture and YA books. Her passion is creating whimsical, enchanted imagery that communicates the story and evokes a fantasy world. While she uses vivid color for most of her art, she occasionally explores darker or gothic fantasy stories, which she portrays in a more mature visualization. Söndra is available for cover and inside book art as well as digital retouching art services.

Contact Söndra at rymer@fairytalesimagery.com or visit www.fairytalesimagery.com.
Capstone Young Readers, a leading publisher of children’s books and digital products and services, announces the February release of *Juneteenth for Mazie*, just in time for Black History Month. This beautiful story by award-winning author and illustrator Floyd Cooper will captivate both children and adults.

June 19, 2015 marks the 150th anniversary of Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day, Emancipation Day, and Juneteenth Independence Day. On June 19, 1865, soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, announcing the end of the Civil War and the end of slavery in the United States—over two years after President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. Celebrated annually on June 19, Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of African-American citizens throughout the U.S. As of May 2014, 43 U.S. states and the District of Columbia have recognized Juneteenth as either a state holiday or a special day of observance. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

“As a child, Juneteenth was another chance for me to gather with my many cousins, aunts, uncles, and grand folks for barbecue and soul music as we often did for many other holidays and birthdays,” says Cooper. “This book brings it all back to me and with a deeper understanding of what it’s all about. Juneteenth is joy! Juneteenth is happy! *Juneteenth for Mazie* is for everyone!”

**Award-winning author and illustrator Floyd Cooper** is the illustrator of over 90 children’s books. He has received the Coretta Scott King Honor Award three times and the Coretta Scott King Award for Illustration in 2009 for *The Blacker the Berry*. *From the Land of Milk and Honey* was nominated for a 2013 NAACP Image Award for literature, and *These Hands* was awarded the 2012 Sankei Award in Japan for outstanding illustration. Floyd travels extensively, sharing his talents in schools and conferences across America. Visit his website: www.FloydCooper.com.

This hardcover book is available at local booksellers, online booksellers and on the Capstone website. Launched in 2012, Capstone Young Readers is the trade publishing program of Capstone. Learn more at www.CapstoneYoungReaders.com.

In *Juneteenth for Mazie*, Floyd Cooper creates a touching picture book of the history of Juneteenth. Set in the present, Mazie learns the struggles and the triumphs of her family’s past as she gets ready to celebrate Juneteenth, a great day in American history—the day her ancestors were no longer slaves. Through stunning illustrations in oil wash, Cooper captures young Mazie’s joy in this celebration of freedom.
CAN YOU FIND THE HIDDEN OBJECTS?

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Hi, I’m Lilly. I’m in second grade and I am six years old. In a couple days, I’m turning 7. I’m super excited for my birthday party this weekend. I’ve invited my favorite friends from my class. My parents and I have been talking about it for months. My mom and I went to the store to order my cake. I wanted my cake to be chocolate. And square. And have red roses made out of frosting. And have my name written on it. And with 7 candles. The cake was very important to me! I love birthday cake and I look forward to it every year.

The day of my birthday was finally here. When I was still sleeping in my bed, my parents woke me up singing “Happy Birthday” to me. My mom said, “You can open one present, my birthday princess.” I was so thrilled. I got up and saw a giant big gift. I ripped it open. I gasped! It was a dollhouse. It had a shower, it had a kitchen, it had a painting on the wall and it had a bedroom. I gave my mom a great big hug. I also said “thank you.”

Later that day, I went to school. Everybody sang “Happy Birthday” to me, even the teacher. Later in math, all I could think about was my birthday. We were going to Peter Piper Pizza. I couldn’t wait. When school got out, I ran up to my mom and said, “Is it my birthday party yet??” She smiled and said “Not yet, but in an hour your birthday party will start.” At home, I played checkers by myself. That was the slowest hour ever!

Finally, people started coming over to my house. The three friends I invited were Sunny, Kit Kat, and Furry. They had awkward names but they were really nice friends. Everybody was super excited to go to Peter Piper Pizza, so after showing my friends my room, I asked my mom when we were going. She said, “right now.”

When we arrived, we all ran straight to the games. My favorite game was Wheel of Fortune. I won hundreds of tickets. You could even win up to a thousand tickets if you play that game. After that, it was cake time. The most important part of my birthday was going to happen now. My worst nightmare had come true! Mom said that they never delivered the cake! Without my cake, my party would be ruined. I couldn’t help it. I started to cry.

My mom tried to tell me it would be okay. She gave my friends and me more tokens to play games, then ran to the grocery store and brought back cupcakes shaped together like a giant birthday cupcake! It was perfect. She knew just what I wanted. It didn’t have my name on it, and there weren’t any flowers made out of frosting, but I wasn’t going to let it spoil my birthday. All cake is yummy (especially chocolate), and I’m okay with cupcakes shaped together like a giant cupcake. My birthday was saved!

The end.

Kids Can Publish has joined StoryMonsters Ink!

Teachers can now submit their students’ written works, such as poems, articles, stories, book reviews, etc. to Kids Can Publish for online print consideration. This means that if your teacher thinks your work is exceptional for your grade level, we might publish it in StoryMonsters Ink! Visit www.storymonstersink.com and click on “Kids Can Publish” for instructions on how to submit your work!
**Winter Reading Guide**

**Fleeting Visions**
by Rene Natan
Prey to vicious people, teenager Louis Saura, a native of Ontario, doesn’t know where to turn. Orphaned at the age of two, poor and alone, Louis wants to break loose from Camilo Estorbar’s vise and take with him Selina, a young victim, like himself, of an underage prostitution ring. He crosses paths with Detective Gordon Stevenson of the London Police Service, who is very determined to eliminate the exploitation of minors from the city he patrols and loves.

**Juicy Jack Adventures: Meet The Wild Pack**
by Leigh Carrasco, illustrated by Angela Mia De la Vega
Jack can’t believe his good luck. His human is taking him on vacation all the way from Tennessee to Abuela’s farm in the mountains of Peru. Nothing goes as planned and danger lurks around every corner when Jack’s curiosity thrusts him into the midst of a wild pack of guinea pigs. Will he make it back to Abuela’s to the safety of his cage or served up on a dinner plate? Join Jack as he navigates the wilds of Peru and learns Spanish along the way.

**My Extraordinary Life**
by Monica Vickers
This is a true story about a woman born without an arm or legs. Saved from an institution for “deformed” children and growing up “normally” makes for a compelling story. She learns to drive a car and finds work as a medical transcriptionist. The story of her meeting and falling for her husband and his battle with his parents over marrying a disabled girl is extremely powerful and would definitely generate awards if made into a movie. This is truly an extraordinary life and book. For a signed copy of the book, please contact the author at mmvickers@gmail.com.

**Queen Vernita Baja Quail**
by Dawn Menge, illustrated by Pamela Snyder
Queen Vernita of Oceaneer rings in the New Year by reflecting on her past adventures, expressing gratitude for her many friends and wondering what the coming months will bring. She does not have to wait long to find out; before the clock strikes twelve, Vernita already has a slew of invitations to visit the Land of Quail. What follows is a whirlwind of sun, sand, and as always, endless opportunities for learning. Indeed, *Queen Vernita Visits Baja Quail* may be the most exciting installment of Dawn Menge’s award-winning series. As with Dawn Menge’s books, *Queen Vernita Visits Baja Quail* teaches children much more than facts and figures; it also imparts valuable life lessons.
**That Mama is a Grouch**
by Sherry Ellis, illustrated by Don Berry
Will anything get a mother yelling about time-outs and withholding favors faster than a toy-strewn house? In *That Mama is a Grouch* by Sherry Ellis, an intelligent and very wise narrator reminds us in charming rhyme that mothers are human, most often loving, and that certain situations will guarantee driving them to their breaking point. Children from three to seven will delight in this story of a mommy who’s nearly out of control and will learn the importance of something as simple as putting away toys.

**Have You Ever Heard a Screeching Cat?**
by Melvin H. Harlan, illustrated by Dwight Nacaytuna
Who’s afraid of a furry red cap, a shadow or their own reflection staring back? Is there a reason to fear your best friend who happens to be a cat? *Have You Ever Heard a Screeching Cat?* is a beautifully illustrated children's book addressing a few of the many expressions and reactions to fear, one of the most common and natural emotions. Join Arlynn and his furry, fraidy-cat Max in a present-day fable in a modern family setting as they portray an important moral lesson with a fun and entertaining example of coping and overcoming their fears.
Best Ever Popcorn Balls

“Sweet, crunchy balls of popcorn are a delicious snack!”

Submitted by: TABKAT
Photo by: Chefbound
Prep Time: 10 Minutes
Cook Time: 10 Minutes
Servings: 20

Ingredients:
3/4 cup light corn syrup
1/4 cup margarine
2 teaspoons cold water
2 5/8 cups confectioners’ sugar
1 cup marshmallows
5 quarts plain popped popcorn

Directions:
1. In a saucepan over medium heat, combine the corn syrup, margarine, cold water, confectioners’ sugar and marshmallows. Heat and stir until the mixture comes to a boil. Carefully combine the hot mixture with the popcorn, coating each kernel.

2. Grease hands with vegetable shortening and quickly shape the coated popcorn into balls before it cools. Wrap with cellophane or plastic wrap and store at room temperature.

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Mary-Ellen O’Keefe is a smart and happy little girl who loves to talk, sing, ask questions and generally speak her mind. That is, until her first day of school, where the unfamiliarity of a new and different environment makes her nervous and shy and causes her to go on an unexpected and very unusual “Word-Speaking Diet.” This is strange! It’s not normal! Mary-Ellen’s never quiet! It was like she was on some sort of Word-Speaking Diet! Unfortunately, Mary-Ellen’s sudden bashfulness at school prevents her new teacher and classmates from getting to know what a great little girl Mary-Ellen really is. This “shy-acting act” goes on for weeks and eventually, after a gentle pep talk from Mom about the importance of speaking up, it’s up to Mary-Ellen to decide if she’ll be able to muster the courage and the confidence to once and for all end her “Word-Speaking Diet” and finally let her schoolmates hear her amazing voice.

Mary-Ellen O’Keefe’s Word-Speaking Diet is a tender work of Tom Neely’s heart. He wrote this story to help his daughter through those uncomfortable burps and gulps of childhood. All of us, regardless of age, can look back and recall those rough moments of adjusting, those momentary blips where our personality blurred and we forgot who we are. Some, too, may remember that watchful eye that caught our slip, and that special person who was able to steady our balance again.

Mary-Ellen is an amazing little girl, who is able to capture and hold every moment in awareness and give it clarity and definition. From naming the crumbs that remain upon her plate to waking her pillow and favorite toy with morning joy, the world is alive to her, and she drinks it in with gusto. We all at some point, like Mary-Ellen, come face-to-face with uncertainty, and must take that step forward and introduce ourselves. Neely’s loving reach was able to help Mary-Ellen take that step, and paved a path for many more to follow and find that gift of self that makes us unique. This is an enjoyable means to help our children realize they are not alone, and they can overcome every uncertainty, just like Mary-Ellen O’Keefe!

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