



SCBWI:NE 2006

July & August

NEWS



EVENTS

July 17-21

Children's Illustration
Intensive with Nancy White

Jump Start Your Writing Career

by Suzanna E. Henson, Ph.D.

As an unpublished writer, I attended the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators February 2004 Conference in New York City. Would this conference jumpstart my career? Would it be a great place to network with like-minded writers? Would I end up selling a manuscript?

I did not end up selling a manuscript at the conference, but I did come away with invaluable insights into children's literature. Since that time, I have been lucky enough to attend a few more SCBWI conferences; each event has been a wonderful opportunity to network with colleagues and to gain insights from leading professionals. Since that cold, dreary day in 2004, I have now sold five books, finished a Ph.D., and become a college professor.

Today I realize that jumpstarting a career is an ongoing process. How do you do it? There are several methods I use on a regular basis.

Attend conferences. When you go to a conference, you begin to take your writing seriously. I met friends at the 2004 conference who have published books and jumpstarted their own careers. Just by attending a conference (or preferably a few conferences) you begin the apprenticeship in the craft, and you make a strong commitment to your writing. You also widen your circle of writing colleagues and friends.

Study the audience. When I craft

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Words Are Like Toys!

by Kate Ross

"Words were as much fun to play with as toys," said Paul Fleischman, Newberry Medal winner, on the author's visit to our local middle school. Growing up with a father who wrote children's stories, Sid Fleischman, author of *The Giant Rat of Sumatra*: or *Pirates Galore*, the younger Fleischman found a fascination with words and building words into stories. Fleischman's father read his developing stories aloud to his family creating a theatre-like atmosphere within the home.

As the colorful autumn trees flaunted in our mountains, our middle school participated in a statewide reading of *Seedfolks* by Paul Fleischman. Copies of the book were distributed to 7th, 8th, and 9th graders and interested community members. The small state of Vermont was off and reading in the *Seedfolks* project.

Prior to Fleischman's visit, the middle school librarian organized visits to local vegetable farms to plant garlic and harvest vegetables. Students wrote poetry, created artwork and wrote their own additional chapters to *Seedfolks*. A group of ninth graders designed seed packets to illustrate key points in the story.

Seedfolks focuses on a neighborhood in Cleveland, Ohio once fondly recognized as a melting pot of multicultural richness. I know. I grew up there. But Fleischman didn't visit Cleveland prior to writing the book. During his talk, he

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Cassidy, Fletcher Farm School for the Arts and Crafts, Ludlow, VT. Designed for those seriously interested in entering children's illustration field, this course focuses on the creation of artwork and business end of children's illustration. Beginning students will learn the basics of creating a piece of artwork from concept to finish in the medium of your choice. Returning or advanced students can work on own project or will be given an assignment and will create a book dummy by end of week. For more information visit www.fletcherfarm.org.

Saturday, July 29

10:00 am - 4:00 pm. Follow the Yellow Brick Road... The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Amherst, MA. A daylong celebration of all things Oz, including a screening of the 1939 classic film, *The Wizard of Oz*, and at 2:00 Tornadoes, Twisters, and Pop-Ups, Oh My! Presentation and book signing by Robert Sabuda. Event is Free with Museum Admission. For reservations call 413 658-1155 or email annr@picturebookart.org

July 30-Aug. 4

Writing for Young Readers, Fine Arts

Work Center, Provincetown. Liz Rosenberg leads this class that introduces a variety of techniques and genres, including fiction, non-fiction, realism, fantasy, etc. It will focus on many elements from the cadence of picture books through writing scenes for young adults. Participants can bring works in progress or use in-class exercises. Open to beginner as well as published writers. Rosenberg has published more than twenty prize winning books for young readers. She was chair of the 2005 National Book Award in Young People's Literature. For more info visit www.fawc.org/summer.

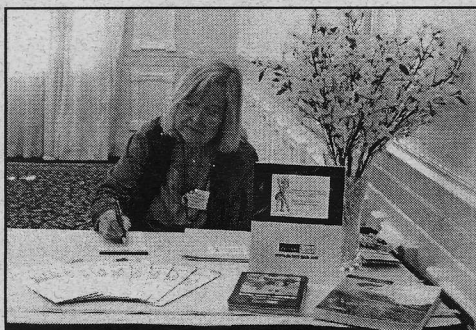
EXHIBITS:

Through July 23:

2 Children's Book Exhibits at the Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 224 Benefit St., Providence, RI :

"From Goodnight Moon to Art Dog: The World of Clement, Edith and Thacher Hurd." This exhibit features the work of Clement Hurd, illustrator of "Good Night Moon" and more than 100 other children's books. Also on display: 70 illustrations by the Hurd family, including Clement's

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Volunteer Mary Greene keeping track of portfolio entries at the May SCBWI Annual 2006 conference where 57 NE Illustrators exhibited, 13 Editors/Art Editors/Art Agents/Art Buyers walked through. Photos by Jen O'Keefe.

Words Are Like Toys (cont. from p1)

admitted he was a lousy gardener. These became curious anomalies for the students. How could an author write about a place never visited? And be a lousy gardener, yet write about gardening? Fleischman easily explained that was the purpose for research! Ah-ha – the proverbial light bulb flashed on as the students listened!

In *Seedfolks*, thirteen people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds contribute to a neighborhood garden, from seeds to water to loving care. Stories are shared of pasts and wishes for the future. The book is a simple read, intertwining a storyline about a culturally diverse and multi-generational community coming together for a common cause.

Fleischman's visit to our local school was the first stop of a two-day tour around Vermont. He was fresh. After speaking for about twenty minutes, he fielded questions from the auditorium filled with students, teachers and community members. One student asked how Fleischman generated ideas for his books. The answer was simple: ideas are everywhere. He always carries a \$.98 notebook and mechanical pencil. Writers need to be open to receiving ideas -- to focus on what's happening around them.

When asked which character of the thirteen in *Seedfolks* he related to most, Fleischman replied, "We all have 100 characters inside of us." The meaning of 'Seedfolks' is ancestors. He chose to focus on the people in the story rather than the garden, rationalizing character perspective.

Hands popped up continuously. A student asked how Fleischman felt at the completion of the book. Fleischman responded that he was anxious. "Doubt is the dragon we have to slay everyday." When asked by two students in a row whether he'd ever grown marijuana, Fleischman skillfully dodged to

another question. There were no ramifications, just a bit of chatter and rustling in seats.

"Good things happen by accident, when you're a writer," stated Fleischman when asked how it felt to be published. This reading project fostered growth among students and staff; working together to better understand ethnic diversity and strength in community.

How to present as a children's book author to an auditorium full of eager young listeners, especially developing adolescents appears a challenging task. There is such a wide array of interests, abilities and developmental ages! Paul Fleischman easily shared practical information, magical moments of inspiration, and family history. I was fascinated at how smoothly he answered the questions: skillfully ignoring when necessary and providing relevant age-appropriate tidbits, such as "You all know that at the center of every snowflake is a grain of dust to which water vapor coalesces?" Fleischman showed surprise that these Vermonters didn't know this tidbit!

One of the last questions asked, "What is the weirdest question you've ever been asked?" Fleischman laughed and replied, "That one!" A quip, a smile, and applause!

Because I am an aspiring children's book author myself, I imagined - what would I do in those shoes, behind that lectern, in an auditorium filled with knowledge-hungry, wise-cracking middle school students? I can only hope that someday I will present as skillfully. ♦

Kate Ross is a freelance writer with a few educational publications under her belt, such as Help Yourself! Activities to Promote Safety & Self-Esteem (Redleaf Press: 2001) and numerous activities in several Gryphon House Giant Encyclopedia editions. She adapted Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book as a hi-lo

reader for Edcon Publishers (2005). In order to keep a steady income flowing, she doubles as a consulting speech/language pathologist for early childhood programs where she researches constantly. She also gains valuable information right at home with two teenage daughters and a silly Chocolate Labradoodle!

Critique Group News (cont. from p2)

nvccrayon@aol.com

West Bath-Robin Hansen at 207-443-4571

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Bedford-Muriel Dubois at 603-472-8741 • The group meets the 3rd Saturday of the month from 10:30 am -12:30 pm at the Bedford Public Library.

Nashua Area Children's Authors (NACA)-Allison Anneser at allisonanneser@charter.net

Nashua Illustrators-Christine Dion at christine@christinedion.com

Newport-Cindy Davis at 603-863-5896 or hotdog@sugar-river.net

Peterborough Illustrators-Opening Soon! A Children's book illustrators critique group is forming in Peterborough, NH. The group will initially be limited to 8 members and can include all levels of illustrators. This is a great time to share your images and gain important feedback from your peers. Contact gingerpixels@aol.com if you wish to join.

Salem-We are open to serious writers and meet the 2nd Tuesday evening of every month. For more information contact Janet Arden at jarden@comcast.net or 603-898-6817.

CONNECTICUT

Canton-Sallie Norelli, Community Relations Manager, Barnes & Noble. Contact Sallie at 860-693-1951 or crm2223@bn.com

Cheshire-Ron Gagliardi, 5 Dover Ct. Cheshire, CT 06410

Fairfield-Amanda Marrone at 203-926-8875 or jamm@snet.net • The group concentrates on middle grades and YA's. They meet once a month in the evening with people who are actively reading and writing

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Sincere apologies are tendered to Kathy Dawson of Harcourt Children's Books. Her thorough and inspiring presentation at the NE SCBWI 12th Annual Writer's Retreat at Whispering Pines in Greene, RI this past February was summarized in last issue's article, "Capturing Fear on a Page."

Though sprung from enthusiasm for the topic, we regret the scope of the article trod heavily on the boundaries outlined in the newly formulated

SCBWI policy regarding dissemination of copyrighted work.

In addition, Kathy Dawson's title was incorrectly stated. Her correct title at Harcourt is Associate Editorial Director.

We regret the article was published without Kathy Dawson's prior express permission and again, offer our sincere apologies.

— A. Michelle

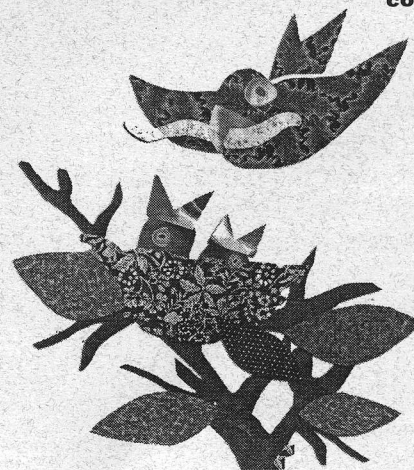


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