

Children's Book Guild News



CHILDREN'S
BOOK GUILD
of WASHINGTON, DC

Monthly News

Authors • Illustrators • Children's Literature Specialists

[Printer-Friendly Version \(pdf\)](#)

Pages

[Home](#)

[Guild Member Blogs](#)

[Busboys and Poets](#)

About Me



Monthly News

The Children's Book Guild of Washington, DC is a professional organization of authors, illustrators and children's literature specialists promoting high standards in children's literature since 1945. Visit us at <https://childrensbookguild.org/>

[View my complete profile](#)

Tuesday, November 23, 2021

December 2021

From Guild President Erica Perl

Happy holidays!

December is already flying by (and who isn't ready to say FAREWELL to 2021, amirite?) and my thoughts are turning to the new year and all the exciting things 2022 will hold for the Guild. But before I get to that, I need to say a quick "how great was that?!" about our conversation with Christina Soontornvat, facilitated by Edie Ching. It's always fascinating to spend time with talented, accomplished creators who are also charming and down-to-earth. The hits just keep on coming with this year's programming committee.



Okay, on to the exciting things ahead in 2022. **BREAK OUT YOUR NEW CALENDAR AND MARK IT UP!** Brendan Kiely will be joining us (by Zoom) on Thursday, January 20, 2022 at 1 pm. And on January 22, 2022, you're all invited to our **IN-PERSON** Guild holiday hathering at Denizens Brewery in Silver Spring. Please note that all attendees need to be vaccinated and keep an eye out for an evite so we can anticipate how many will attend.

Also, the time of this event is 4:00 – 6:30 pm (the save the date said "5 pm" but we needed to shift slightly earlier to accommodate a gathering of ICU nurses... talk about people who deserve a party!). Feel free to bring 2020 and 2021 books (that you created, or that you just love) for show-and-tell, as it has been too long since we've shared and admired each other's work in person. Looking forward to seeing you there and raising a glass to the season and the power of books and Guild friendships!

Erica

Also in This Issue:

1. Guild Holiday Gathering - Save the Date!
2. November Program Recap
3. New Member Applications
4. Member News

Guild Holiday Gathering - Save the Date!

When: Jan. 22, 2022 at 5 p.m.

Where: [Denizen's Brewing Company](#) (1115 East West Hwy., Silver Spring, Maryland 20910)

You should have received a "Save the Date" message via [evite.com](#) for this year's Children's Book Guild Holiday Gathering (if you didn't, please check your spam filters!). We hope you can attend. You're welcome to bring a guest (all attendees must be vaccinated). Please note that since Guild members expressed a strong preference for the January date, the party will likely be indoors, in a private space and 100 percent of the staff is vaccinated.

In Case You Missed Our November Program...

Christina Soontornvat in Conversation with Edie Ching

By Katherine Marsh



"We're a story species," Christina Soontornvat said. "It's how we bond. It's how we make sense of the world."

Soontornvat has helped young readers make sense of the world — specifically the country and culture of Thailand — through her 2021 Newbery Honor books, *A Wish In The Dark* and *All Thirteen: The Incredible Rescue of the That Boys' Soccer Team*. In November, she spoke to Edie Ching from her home in Austin, Texas and shared thoughts about her writing and

research process, her family's influence on her work and the dangers of cultural appropriation.

Soontornvat has a background in mechanical engineering and science education. Her previous career involved creating exhibits for museums, a job that she said prepared her well for writing stories for all ages. She

drew on her Thai family roots to create *A Wish In The Dark*, a fictional reimagining of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, set in Thailand. Soortornvat's father, who grew up there, was a Buddhist monk. "He used to tell me stories growing up," she explained. This allowed her to make the book "as Thai as possible" by ensuring that any worldbuilding she did was rooted in ideas and themes integral to the culture and Thai Buddhist religion.

Soortornvat was nearly finished with the book when, in 2018, she went on a family vacation to Thailand. She was there when an international team rescued a youth soccer club from a flooded cave complex, a story that captivated people around the world. Soortornvat returned from the trip determined to write her first non-fiction book using her deep connections to the community and culture. For *All Thirteen*, she returned to the town where the rescue took place with her family, including her father, uncle and cousins, who served as her translators. She also interviewed many of the rescuers, including members of the U.S. military.

Soortornvat has been a critic of cultural appropriation — a topic she expanded on for the Guild. Telling the story of a marginalized group to which an author does not belong can be done, she said, "with care and respect and extreme thoughtfulness." However, she noted, "there's a difference between that and there's this hot story and everybody's going to run in and try to tell it." In the case of the boys' soccer team rescue, she criticized a rushed book by an American author without Thai roots as "offensive and disrespectful" of the country's culture. The enormous recognition her own work has received has given her hope, however, that the publishing industry is becoming more attuned to cultural accuracy and care.

The story species has many more tales to expect from Soortornvat: She is currently at work on several new projects, including a graphic novel memoir based on her seventh-grade cheerleading try-outs and a Thai/ Southeast Asian-inspired early middle grade fantasy series. She always starts with a theme. "I can't really dive in and work," she said, "until I think about what I want to say."

New Membership Applications

The following authors have applied for membership in the Children's Book Guild.

Lee Gjertsen Malone

Lee is the author of two middle grade novels, *The Last Boy at St. Edith's* and *Camp Shady Crook*, both published by Simon & Schuster.

Lee says, "Until June 2020 I lived and worked in Cambridge, Massachusetts where there is a large and vibrant group of kid lit writers. My family moved to Alexandria, Virginia in June 2020 and since then I've been eager to find new ways to connect with the children's book writing community in the DC area. I started writing children's books for the same reason many authors do — because I've



loved reading them since I was a kid myself. I look forward to meeting more of the Guild members as our world slowly opens up."

You can read more about Lee [here](#).

Dr. Jewell Parker Rhodes



Jewell, who was the featured speaker during the Guild's October luncheon, is the author of several books for adults and youth including the New York Times bestsellers *Ghost Boys* and *Black Brother, Black Brother*. Her most recent novel is *Paradise on Fire*. She is on the board of An Open Book Foundation and a member of the library council at Carnegie Mellon University.

Jewell writes: "My grandmother taught me how to tell stories. I grew up in a three-story brick house in Pittsburgh, raised by my grandparents. To escape the heat and clutter, my grandmother and I sat on our stoop while she told me stories — stories about our family, slavery, her childhood in the south, stories about love and death and life."

"At the same time I inhaled books, blowing through them as fast as the librarians could give them to me. I read illustrated versions of classics like *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, the Arthurian legends. In my Pittsburgh ghetto, we never saw white people unless we took the bus downtown. I only saw them on the covers of my books."

"I was a junior in college at Carnegie-Mellon when I saw a copy of Gail Jones's *Corregidora* on the library shelf. Black women wrote novels? It was a revelation. I changed my major the very next day from dance and theater to drama criticism. When I finished my undergrad, I went on to a master's program in English."

"I've written novels, a memoir, and two writing guides — but the whole time it felt as though I were practicing to someday write books for children, books with strong little girls who looked like me, the kind of books I wished I could have read as a kid. When Hurricane Katrina swept Louisiana, Lanessa's voice sprung into my head and I knew I needed to write my first children's novel, *Ninth Ward*."

"One book can change a child's life, and that is why I deeply admire the work of Children's Book Guild to promote literacy and inclusivity in the field of children's literature. I hope to share ideas and engage with this vibrant community, and together champion books for the most important audience — children."

Read more about Jewell Parker Rhodes and her books [here](#).

Patty Pearson

In 2018, Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers published Patty's book *Fly Girls: The Daring American Women Pilots Who Helped Win WWII*. It went on to win the Grand Canyon Reader Award, and was named a "best of" by A



Mighty Girl and Bank Street. Since then, Patty's book *Fighting for the Forest: How FDR's Civilian Conservation Corps Helped Save America* (2019) was named an "outstanding best of" by Bank Street, a notable social studies trade book by NCSS, and was a finalist for the New-York Historical Society Children's History Book Prize. *Conspiracy: Nixon, Watergate, and Democracy's Defenders* came out in late 2020. Her next book, *We Are Your Children Too: Black Students, White Supremacists, and the Battle for America's Schools in Prince*

Edward County, Virginia, releases in August, 2022. Patty taught history for over 30 years before beginning her career as a writer.

She writes: "My journey from person who liked writing to published author is somewhat a Grandma Moses story. I grew up with a father who insisted on correct grammar before he'd answer our questions, and went to a high school where composition was fully half of every English course. It would have made sense, I suppose, to major in English or journalism, but an unexpected love affair with history got in the way during junior year when a remarkable teacher mesmerized thirty teenagers every day with meaningful, inspiring, sometimes terrible true stories of the past and their connection to the present.

"I kept that teacher in mind throughout my thirty-plus years in history education. Stories were a way to draw students into their own love affairs with history. I told them stories and had them tell me stories and I treasured my career path. However, though I wrote a bit during that time, my writing took a backseat to planning and grading and raising four children. Once life shifted and reshaped itself, I decided it was now or never. I went back to school.

"Earning an MFA in Writing for Young People from Lesley University was one of the best things I've ever done. I learned, honed my skills, met fellow writers, and worked with wonderful mentors who helped me get at least one toe in a few doors. And then it happened — the Grandma Moses part of the tale. I'd sent an editor the blurbs for several nonfiction projects I was working on and she'd asked to see one of them. On a lovely summer morning weeks later, I was happily volunteering with the National Park Service at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial when my phone dinged. I waited for a quiet moment and stepped into the shade to open the email. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers was offering me a contract for *Fly Girls: The Daring American Women Pilots Who Helped Win WWII*.

"I would like to join the guild in order to expand my professional circle, continue to hone my skills, and immerse myself in the writers' world."

Read more about Patty Pearson and her books [here](#).

Member News

Terry Catasús Jennings' new book *Pauli Murray, The Life of a Pioneering Feminist and Civil Rights Activist* will release on January 4, 2022 from Little Bee Books. Murray was the woman who conceptualized the argument that eventually won *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, but never received credit because she was a woman. She was also the moving force behind the inclusion of gender as a protected population in the 1964 Civil Rights Act that guaranteed equal

pay for equal work for women. Terry collaborated with Murray's niece, Rosita Stevens-Holsey on this biography, which is told in verse.



Ann McCallum Staats has a new book to share: *High Flyers: 15 Inspiring Women Aviators and Astronauts* is based on exclusive interviews with various go-getters such as Senator Tammy Duckworth, astronauts Ellen Ochoa and Karen Nyberg, as well as commercial and military pilots, including the first female Blue Angels pilot. The book will release on July 19, 2022.



Debbie Levy's new picture book, *Photo Ark ABC: An Animal Alphabet in Poetry and Pictures* came out in October from National Geographic Kids. From armadillo to zebra, the book pairs playful poems that celebrate the diversity of the animal world with the stunning photography of National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore. The photos are part of Sartore's mission to photograph all the animal species in human care, with special attention given to rare and endangered species. Debbie is especially tickled that, in addition to composing a pantoum for a frog, a cinquain for a panda, and a limerick for a yabby, she concluded the book with a reverso, a fun and challenging poetic form invented by children's poet Marilyn Singer. For Debbie, this book was the perfect pandemic lock-down project.

Marty Rhodes Figley and her book *Santa's Underwear* will be featured at the annual Children's Literature Centre's Storybook Event in Frostburg, Maryland on Saturday, December 4. During the festivities Marty will visit the Centre's adopted school, have a book signing at the Gunter Hotel and participate in the Storybook Christmas parade.



A Whale of a Tea Party, the first book of Erica S. Perl's new early reader series, *Whale, Quail and Snail*, illustrated by Sam Ailey, will be published on December 14, 2021 by Simon & Schuster. In *A Whale of a Tea Party*, we meet Whale, who spends most of her time exploring the area near Tiny Island, dreaming of a day when she'll have real friends, not just rock friends. One day, Whale decides to throw a tea party...and is thrilled when Quail shows up and wants to join in! But will the sudden and unexpected arrival of Snail put Whale and Quail's new friendship on the rocks?

Brenda Seabrooke's Sherlock Holmes pastiche as written by Dr. Watson, "The Christmas Card Case," has been published in *The MX Book of New Sherlock Holmes Stories, Part XXVIII: More Christmas Adventures (1869-1888)*. In addition, Brenda's story, "The Scourge of Scorrhill Manor" was published in October by Belanger Books in *Sherlock Holmes and Further Adventures in the Realm of H.G. Wells*. The story is set in Baskerville country on the moors of southwestern England where a new beastly scourge is upon the land.



Shout Mouse Press and Latin American Youth Center celebrate the launch of four new bilingual Spanish/English children's books authored by immigrant youth. These young adult authors, representing eight

countries around the world, used their own lived experiences to inspire endearing and authentic stories centering immigrant families as the inaugural titles in Shout Mouse's "Beyond Borders" series. Each of the four books is an exploration of the immigrant experience from a youth perspective. In *Searching for Sancocho/En busca del sancocho* (illustrated by Yurieli Otero-Asmar), authors Jamileth Brito and Mario Serrano celebrate the deep connection of family recipes and honor lost loved ones. *Joy-Grace and the Dress Dilemma/Joy-Grace y el dilema del vestido* (illustrated by Joy Ingram), a story by Joy Ugwu and Tseganesh Chala, explores the challenges of having a multicultural identity. Perla's *Magical Goodbye/El adiós mágico de Perla* (illustrated by Fatima Seck), by Deyssy Mosso and Yenner Rengifo Chaverra, reflects the experience of leaving home to move to another country. The four writer team Andy Pina, Antonia Marisol Garcia, Pedro Reyes, and Yunion Jose Garcia wrote *Jasmín Pictures Home/Jasmín ilustra su hogar* (illustrated by Ian L. Springer) to explore what it's like to be different in a new country. These four books will be celebrated in an online launch event on December 7th at 7pm. Attendance is free for all; RSVP [here](#).

Posted by Monthly News at [8:59 AM](#) 0 comments

[Home](#)

[Older Posts](#)

Subscribe to: [Posts \(Atom\)](#)

Followers

Followers (12)



Follow

Powered by [Blogger](#).