

# Children's Book Guild News



the  
children's  
Book Guild

of Washington, D.C.  
Since 1945

## Monthly News

Authors • Illustrators • Children's Literature Specialists

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Saturday, November 29, 2014

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### 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 <http://www.childrensbookguild.org/>

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December 2014

### MARY AMATO ON THE JOURNEY OF A WRITER'S LIFE



Mary Amato grew up in Illinois and started writing at age seven, when her mother gave her a spiral notebook and asked her to keep a journal of a family trip to California. Her favorite children's book was *Harriet the Spy*, because Harriet was an excellent journal writer.

Amato studied special education and dance at Indiana University in Bloomington, and did graduate work in fiction-writing and poetry at Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C.

An award-winning children's book author, poet, playwright and songwriter, Amato also cofounded the Firefly Shadow Theater, for which she creates many of the puppets and directs many of the plays. Her books have been translated into foreign languages, optioned for television and produced onstage, and they have won the children's choice awards in several states.

When interviewed about her most recent novel, *Get Happy*, Amato explained that although she grew up with the Midwestern Protestant view that people shouldn't express their feelings, she believes that finding one's true voice and allowing it to come out is a central theme of adolescence. Amato also says that adolescence is the time when kids begin to realize that adults have flaws and that everyone makes mistakes. In her opinion, mistakes are a critical part of learning—not things to suffer through but opportunities to learn.

For Amato, love drives the writing process. For instance, she loves her characters because she can see through their flaws to their better selves. She calls herself a "radical reviser" and talks about how important it is not to become too attached to what she's written so that she can introduce an exciting new idea even if she has to completely rewrite a book.

Amato will discuss how her passion for music has shaped her work, how her inclusion of music in her work led to surprising and useful professional and

personal growth, and how fully embracing a passion for any subject can lead to fascinating developments in the life of a writer.

Date: Thursday, December 11

Time: 11:30 a.m. "social hour"; noon luncheon

Place: [Busboys and Poets](#)

1025 Fifth Street NW (at K Street)

Menu: All choices \$25 (\$26 when paid online via PayPal)

:: CHOICE OF SANDWICH (all sandwiches served with a salad of baby greens and house-made kettle chips) ::

- Falafel Sandwich (vegetarian/vegan) with house-made hummus, cucumbers, lettuce, tomato and onion on whole-wheat pita, served with tahini sauce (vegan without tahini sauce)

- Home-Roasted Turkey Sandwich with Havarti cheese, Dijonnaise, lettuce, tomato and onion on wheat bread

- Grilled Chicken Panini with chipotle mayo, caramelized onions, pepper jack, lettuce and tomato on ciabatta

- Portabella Mushroom Panini (vegetarian) with pesto, roasted red pepper and fresh mozzarella on herb ciabatta

:: GLUTEN-FREE OPTION ::

Beans and Wild Rice with fresh guacamole and pico de gallo (vegan and lactose-free without the sour cream served on the side)

#### IN THIS ISSUE:

1. Corporate support for the 2014 Nonfiction Award
2. Kathy Landwehr's October Program
3. Member News

#### NEWS FLASH!

The Children's Book Guild has learned that KPMG, a large national accounting firm, will sponsor its 2015 Nonfiction Award ceremony on April 25, 2015. KPMG supports literacy in the D.C. area through a program called KFFL (KPMG Families for Literacy). Many thanks to KPMG for this generous gift.

Fred Bowen, our past president, is responsible for making the connection with KFFL. He became acquainted with KPMG while making pro bono presentations at area schools affiliated with their literacy program. Thanks, Fred!

#### KATHY LANDWEHR INSPIRES GUILD MEMBERS WITH HER KNOWLEDGE, INSIGHT AND HUMOR

by *Betsy Harvey Kraft*

With plenty of humor and thoughtful insight, Kathy Landwehr, vice president of Peachtree Publishers, spoke about trends and cycles in children's books at the November Children's Book Guild luncheon.

She began by stating that many popular subjects in the genre wane only to return in slightly altered forms years later. Pointing to her own seventh-grade reading list, she noted the similarity of subject matter between those books and others recently targeted as too dark (i.e., dealing with drugs, illness or suicide) by some current parents and commentators. These books appeal to kids who either want to learn what others are experiencing, she observed, or are looking for validation of their own lives. She quoted Chris Crutcher, YA book author and teen therapist, who observed, "If a kid has an emotional response to a book, it's therapeutic."

Landwehr also noted that predictions from industry experts often don't materialize. In spite of a 2010 *New York Times* article forecasting a serious slump the sales of picture books, for example, agents tell her they are now selling more of these than other genres. Longer picture books, though, are harder to sell, they tell her. But, contrary to that trend, Landwehr pointed to Brian Floca's Caldecott and Sibert Honor-winning—and text heavy

—*Locomotive*.

Addressing creative trends in picture books, she noted the trend toward textless books, as exhibited in Caldecott Honor books. Nonfiction picture books are also on the rise, along with those that rely heavily on visual literacy. All nonfiction is much broader in scope than in the past and now includes math, rhymes and forgotten stories, as well as biography, she said.

Peachtree has always had a passion for informational books, Landwehr said, and was well-positioned when the Common Core emerged. She does not see the standards as constricting their list in any way. An educated child reads broadly, she said, and the standards simply provide another avenue toward that end.

She highlighted the work being done by We Need Diverse Books, a social-media effort to provide greater diversity in children's books. Too few titles feature characters of color and, as evidenced by a recent Lee and Low study, little has changed since the disparity was first noted more than a decade ago. Authors of children's books remain primarily white and privileged, she said. Structural changes are needed within the industry with regard to staffing, outreach programs and more financial risk-taking on the part of publishers. The definition of diversity has widened, she said, to include transgender characters, gays and lesbians and members of religious minorities.

During the lively question and answer session, Landwehr mentioned that she is always looking for humor in new manuscripts. But too often what she receives isn't a match for her own sense of humor—which entertained and informed us during her engaging presentation.

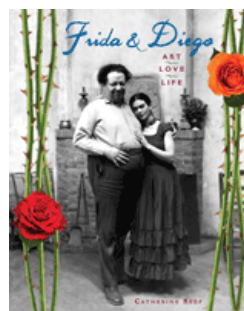
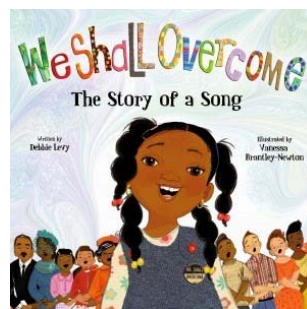
## MEMBER NEWS



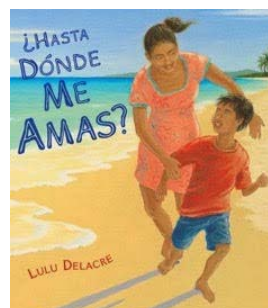
The movie version of MARY DOWNING HAHN's novel *Wait Till Helen Comes* is being filmed in Winnipeg by a Canadian movie company. Mary reports that scriptwriter Victoria Sanchez Mandryk "worked for 10 years to sell the script. Her dedication finally paid off, and I'm so happy for her. The cast includes Isabelle Nerisse (the younger sister in the movie *Mama*) as Heather, and her older sister, Sophie Nerisse (the young girl in *The Book Thief*), as Molly. Like S. E. Hinton, who had cameo roles in three films based on her novels, I have a small role as Mrs. Wilson, the librarian who helps Molly and her brother research the old Harper house. My part was filmed early in October. It was an amazing experience, not just having my brief moment as an actress but watching the shooting and seeing the work that goes into making a movie. The filming should be finished this month. The release date will probably be in 2015."



*Never Say a Mean Word Again*, by JACQUELINE JULES, and *We Shall Overcome: The Story of a Song*, by DEBBIE LEVY, were both awarded 2014 Aesop Accolades by the American Folklore Society. <http://www.afsnet.org/?page=Aesop>



*Frida & Diego: Art, Love, Life*, by CATHERINE REEF, is one of *Booklist's* Top Ten Arts Books for Youth, 2014. *Frida & Diego* was also named to the 2015 Tayshas High School Reading List, which recommends books for recreational reading.



LULU DELACRE is thrilled to report that *¿Hasta dónde me amas?*, the Spanish version of *How Far Do You Love Me?*, has been published. Lulu writes: "My contract read that the Spanish version would come out with the second printing of the English one. And, with the help of all of my friends from the Guild and beyond who bought a copy of the little book, we were able to sell the first printing in one year! Of course, for me was super important to have the Spanish version out. That is the original version. I wrote the book in Spanish, but for obvious reasons it needed to be published in English first."

Tweet Your News

Do you have a publication date for a new book, a local appearance coming up or an award nomination to tout? Don't be shy! The Guild has its own Twitter account (@ChildrensBookGuild) and is looking for news to tweet. Just send your news to Caroline Hickey ([carolinesmithhickey@gmail.com](mailto:carolinesmithhickey@gmail.com)), preferably already edited to fit the 140-character limit. If you'd like to include a link to a webpage with more information, the URL must be included in the 140 characters. URLs can be condensed at a number of sites, including <http://www.tinyurl.com>. If this sounds like too much effort, just send whatever you have to Caroline and she'll make the magic happen.

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**NOTE ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S BOOK GUILD NEWS:** Would you rather print your newsletter than read it online? Current and past issues now available for printing on the Guild's website at <http://www.childrensbookguild.org/guild-newsletters>. Look for the "Newsletter" tab on the left side of the Guild website. There is also a "Printer Friendly Version" link on the top left hand side of this blog.

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