



SELF-PUBLISHING **booklife**

JOBZONE

THE MILLIONS

SUBSCRIBE: PRINT + DIGITAL

LOGOUT

FREE NEWSLETTERS

Search Publishers Weekly



NEWS

REVIEWS

BESTSELLERS

CHILDREN'S

AUTHORS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DIGITAL

INTERNATIONAL

OPINION

Authors | Book News | Industry News

Home > Children's > Industry News

Publicist Yale Press - Yale University - New Haven, CT.

NEXT JOB ▶

# One Reader at a Time: SCBWI Partners with Nonprofits for Literacy Initiative

By Matia Burnett | Mar 05, 2019

Like 130

Share

Tweet



Comments



*This article is part of an occasional feature that focuses on literacy organizations and the work they do to promote reading within their communities.*

The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators is giving back to communities in a big way—and not only by supporting the work of artists and authors. The SCBWI Books for Readers program is a literacy initiative created in 2017 with the mission of providing children's books to underserved communities nationwide. According to Lin Oliver, executive director of the SCBWI, the organization's central aspiration is to "bring forth a new generation of writers and illustrators"—and part of supporting artists and authors means also supporting readers. The BFR program arose through Oliver's desire to introduce a greater literacy component into the work of SCBWI, and to reach an even larger number of readers by working in tandem with existing nonprofits and other social service groups.



SCBWI

A reader in Oviedo, Fla., picks out a picture book.

Each year, SCBWI members are invited to nominate organizations in their communities to become recipients of a collection of 1,000 recently published books. Writers and illustrators are tasked with ordering copies of their own books directly from their publishers to be donated to readers. The donated books can include board books, picture books, middle grade, and YA, depending on the needs of the community being served.

SCBWI staff and members of the board of advisors select one or two organizations to receive the books. In 2018, there were more than 300 organizations nominated. "It was very hard to pick from among those 300!" said Oliver.

The books are typically presented to the recipient organizations during a special event for the chosen communities, with food and festivities. SCBWI regional

## RELATED STORIES:

- More in Children's -> Industry News
- More in articles by Matia Burnett

Want to reprint? Get permissions.

## FREE E-NEWSLETTERS

Enter e-mail address

PW Daily  Tip Sheet

SUBSCRIBE

More Newsletters

advisors frequently volunteer to arrange the delivery of the books, the community celebration, and additional programming. The organizations may choose to hold the books within a lending library or other facility. They may also distribute them to readers for their home libraries.

'One Child at a Time'

## QUICKLINKS

ADVERTISEMENT



PW KidsCast: A Conversation with Antony Barone Kolenc  
YA author and law professor Antony Barone Kolenc discusses his Medieval mystery series, kicking off with 'Shadow in the Dark.'



PW Children's Bookshelf Archive  
Read past issues of Bookshelf right in your

browser. more...

## BLOGS

### ShelfTalker

Meghan Dietsche Goel  
**Hi, I'm a Bookseller! Can I Take Your Puzzle Order Today?**

A bookseller at BookPeople reflects on a week of online and curbside fulfillment.

Cynthia Compton  
**Dispatch from an Empty Store**

View from the front lines of bookselling just

For Oliver, one of the aspects of the program she appreciates most is its collaborative nature. By providing new book collections to organizations already working to hold up and enrich their communities, SCBWI is helping to deepen the impact of those efforts. "We have the opportunity to shine light on these organizations, and to celebrate volunteers," Oliver said. In partnership with the regional groups, "We are making improvements one child at a time."



Amber Mattson

Fargo, N.D., readers peruse books during Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Prior to collecting books, Oliver and regional members of the SCBWI learn about each selected organization and the community it serves. In addition to representing and reflecting the diversity of the communities, Oliver emphasized how the selections are also wide-ranging by design. She finds that many kids who think that they don't like to read just haven't yet picked up a book about a topic that intrigued them.

Particularly for kids growing up in book deserts, having exposure to a range of books can be life changing. Sometimes it's a matter of sitting down with an individual child "and learning what they are interested in," Oliver said. For many of the readers in the communities, the books they receive will be the first they have ever had in their homes.

Readers within the communities that receive books also have opportunities to meet and connect with regional authors and illustrators, who often take part in the book celebrations. According to Tammy Brown, director of community marketing and engagement for the Los Angeles chapter of the SCBWI, "Kids are really interested in what it means to be an illustrator." Those authors and illustrators often form lasting relationships with the organizations selected for Books for Readers, and because they live within the communities that the groups serve, those relationships can be especially meaningful. "We definitely stay in touch," Brown said.



Jan Federle

Two readers show off their book selections.

### Reading Together

The Books for Readers recipients in 2017 were Kinship House, an organization in Portland, Ore., devoted to providing outpatient mental health care for children and their families, and Refugee Dream House in Providence, R.I., which offers support for refugee communities, including individuals from Congo, Somalia, Syria, and other countries where there are existing wars. Oliver remembers the celebration held for the Refugee Dream House as a vibrant coming together of world cultures, saying, "It was a really beautiful night."

Omar Bah, founder and executive director of the Refugee Dream House, was especially grateful that so many of the books were written by authors of color. "What was unique about these books is that they were well suited and culturally appropriate for the refugee children we serve," Bah said.

Today, he continues to see the benefit of the books on the lives of readers within the community. "I always smile when I walk in classrooms and see the refugee children reading these books with so much joy. The biggest takeaway is that these books have been phenomenally helpful in improving the English language skills of our children," he added.

In 2018, the BFR recipients were the Indian Education Program in Fargo, N.D., and the Literacy Alliance, in Oviedo, Fla., which runs literacy programs and donates books to a number of social service groups operating in central Florida. Last November, more than 50 families attended the Books for Readers event, as a community center became a lively browsing library.

The Indian Education Program works to increase graduation rates and school attendance among Native American students, while providing enrichment opportunities for students and their families. The program held its book celebration in tandem with the Fargo and West Fargo Public Schools' Indigenous Peoples' Day on October 8 of last year.

In a press statement, Brown reflected on the Fargo event. "The two communities [SCBWI and the Indian Education Program] felt so in tune," she said. "We were together for what was a celebration of that community in a way that was both spiritual and fun, and we were so privileged to be a part of that."

Bookselling in the strangest of times.

Sign up for our Children's Bookshelf newsletter!

Email address

Subscribe »

## FEATURED REVIEWS



**THE SICILY COOKBOOK: AUTHENTIC RECIPES FROM A MEDITERRANEAN ISLAND**

Cettina Vicenzino. DK, \$30 (240p) ISBN 978-1-4654-9110-7

◀ PREVIOUS

NEXT ▶

## MOST POPULAR

- **Best Books 2019**
- **Macmillan Abandons Library E-book Embargo**
- **Amazon Deprioritizes Book Sales Amid Coronavirus Crisis**
- **Half Price Books Closes All 126 Stores Temporarily**
- **B&N's Daunt: 'Books Are Essential'**
- **B&N, BAM Remain Open**
- **Covid-19 Impact Listing: Cancellations, Closings, Policy Changes, and More**
- **How Kids' Lit Is Responding to the Coronavirus**
- **Authors Launch Digital Children's Book Festival**
- **Scholastic Launches First Digital Book Fest for This Friday**
- **15 Books and Authors Hurt by the Coronavirus**

## BESTSELLERS

View by genre:

Children's Frontlist Fiction

more



Another benefit of the Books for Readers events is having the chance to bring media attention to the organizations, many of which don't have significant name recognition. Following the Fargo event, Patricia J. Murphy, SCBWI literacy initiative creative consultant, arranged for Oliver, author Linda Sue Park, and Indian Education Program coordinator Melody Staebner to be interviewed on National Public Radio and by local media.



Amber Mattson

Students in Fargo sign book plates.

In addition to supplying books to regions that would not otherwise have them, the Books for Readers program serves an even greater purpose: connecting groups with the common devotion to building strong communities through sharing stories. And the circle is soon to widen, as the SCBWI begins accepting Books for Readers nominations for 2019, with the winners to be selected in June.

- 1 Dog Man #8**  
Dav Pilkey, Author
- 2 Chain of Gold**  
Cassandra Clare, Author
- 3 Diary of a Wimpy Kid Book #14**  
Jeff Kinney, Author
- 4 Dragonslayer (Wings of Fire: Legends)**  
Tui T. Sutherland, Author
- 5 Dog Man: For Whom the Ball Rolls: From the Creator of Captain Underpants**  
Dav Pilkey, Author, Dav Pilkey, Illustrator

## ALSO ON PW



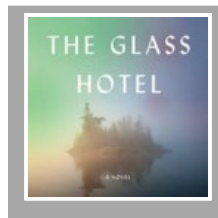
**PW's 2019 Person of the Year**



**Check Out Our Podcasts! more...**



**Ready to Read About 'An Inconvenient Woman'? more...**



**This Week's Starred Reviews**

0 Comments

Sort by

Add a comment...

Facebook Comments Plugin

[About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Submission Guidelines](#) | [Subscriber Services](#) | [Advertising Info](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Do Not Sell](#) | [Calls for Info](#) | [Editorial Calendar](#) | [Archives](#) | [Press](#) | [FAQ](#)

© PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

<b>News</b> Obituaries Book Deals Financial Reporting Page to Screen Bookselling Awards & Prizes Publisher News Comics Business Deals Shows & Events Cooking People	<b>Reviews</b> Fiction Mystery/Thriller Sci-Fi/Fantasy/Horror Romance/Erotica Comics Poetry Inspirational Fiction Nonfiction Lifestyle Religion Children's Web Exclusive	<b>Bestsellers</b> Bio & Autobiography Children's Frontlist Fiction Children's Picture Books Comics Fantasy Food & Drink Hardcover Frontlist Fiction Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction	<b>Children's</b> Authors Book News Industry News	<b>Authors</b> Profiles Interviews Why I Write BookLife	<b>Announcements</b> Adult Announcements Children's Announcements Religion Listings On-Sale Calendar Galley Talk	<b>Digital</b> Devices Copyright Retailing Conferences Content / e-books Apps Digital Marketplace	<b>International</b> Deals News Trade Shows Frankfurt Book Fair London Book Fair New York Rights Fair Sharjah International Book Fair Translation Database
					<b>The Roundup</b>		<b>Job Zone</b>

Religion  
Audio Books  
Manufacturing  
Marketing  
PW Tip Sheet  
Licensing  
Book It  
BookExpo

BookLife

History & Poli-Sci  
Mass Market Frontlist  
Mystery  
Religion Fiction  
Religion Nonfiction  
Romance  
Science Fiction  
Top 10 Overall  
Trade Paper Frontlist

**Opinion**  
ShelfTalker  
Soapbox  
Editorials  
Common Core  
Open Book

**Job Moves**



X