

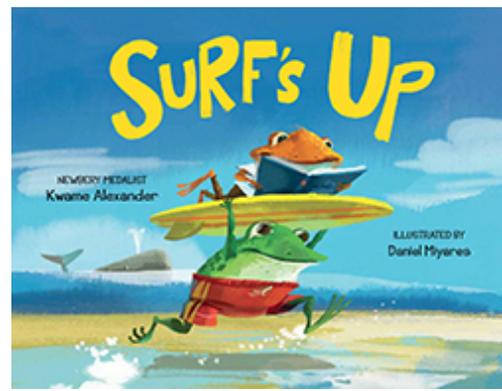


BEA 2016: Big Books from Small Presses Create a Buzz

By Claire Kirch |
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While the five books – and in some cases, the authors or illustrators as well – presented at the BEA Selects: Children’s panel session on May 12 were from small presses, they all made a big impression on the audience. The 30-minute session, held at the Uptown Stage, was moderated by Jennifer Swinhart Voegele, the v-p and marketing director for Consortium Books & Distribution.

The first presenter, for NorthSouth Books, was Daniel Miyares, the illustrator of *Surf’s Up* (Feb.), a picture book written by 2015 Newbery Medalist Kwame Alexander.



The publisher’s catalog copy describes *Surf’s Up* as the story of “Bro and Dude, [who] have very different ideas about how to spend the day at the beach. But as Bro continues to gasp and cheer as he reads his book [*Moby Dick*], Dude can’t help but get curious. Before you can shout ‘Surf’s up!’ both frogs are sharing the same adventure, that is, until they get to the beach.”

“I didn’t even know who Kwame Alexander was,” Miyares recalled. “It’s a book about the joy of reading and what reading can do for you. Every time I read it, I get something more out of it.” Describing the tension in the book as balancing the love of reading with going out to play outside, Miyares said, “The real story is that you have to be the captain of your industry.”

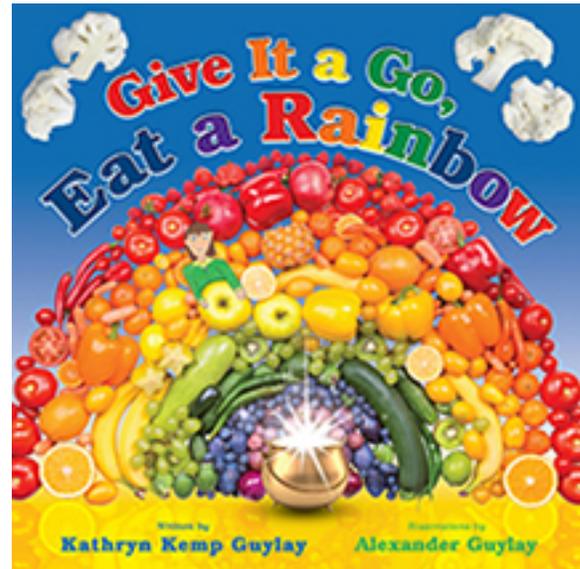
Ariane Laine-Forrest, business development manager of Auzou, a French press distributed in the U.S. by Consortium, presented *The Wolf Who Wanted to Be a Super Hero* (Sept.), a picture book written by Oriane Lallimand and illustrated by Eleonore Thullier. According to the catalog copy, “Becoming a super-hero: what a great idea, thinks the Wolf! No sooner said than done, our Wolf slips into his tights and cape... and starts looking for someone to save! Did you say easy? Not so sure when you’re super clumsy!”



“This is a story not just about super heroes,” Laine-Forrest said, after reading the book aloud. “It’s really a story that tells kids that intentions matter too.”

Next up was Kathryn Kemp Guylay, with her picture book on nutrition and healthy eating, *Give It a Go, Eat a Rainbow* (Healthy Solutions of Sun Valley, July). It was illustrated by Guylay's son, Alexander, age 12.

Explaining that she was a licensed nutritionist who heads up a nonprofit called Nurture, Guylay noted that one in three children born in 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes, due to poor eating habits that can be nipped in the bud by successfully persuading children to include more vegetables in their diets.



“I know what works,” she said, “It’s all about keeping it positive, keeping it fun, and keeping children engaged.”

According to the catalog copy, *Give It a Go, Eat a Rainbow*'s “main character [Blake] starts out surrounded by junk food and feeling ‘down,’ depicted by greys and muted tones. Once Blake discovers the ‘magic’ of colorful fruits and vegetables through a journey that involves shrinking Blake down to a tiny size, colors become brighter as Blake gets closer and closer to the pot of gold (a metaphor for energy and good health)”.

Guylay noted that *Give It a Go, Eat a Rainbow* has been tested with teachers, who have reported positive changes in their students’ eating habits and behaviors afterwards. “Think *The Wizard of Oz* meets *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* meets nutrition/health literature,” she said.

The next speaker, Jordan Hamessley, editorial director of Adaptive Books, presented *The Memory Thief* (Sept.), a middle-grade novel by Bryce Moore that almost did not see the light of day. Originally scheduled to be published by Egmont USA, Adaptive picked it up after Egmont USA ceased operations. Describing the novel as a mashup of *Something Wicked This Way Comes* and *Inside Out*, Hamessley explained that it was a story about a boy, Benjie, who discovers how to remove memories from people’s minds. He thinks that if he can just remove his estranged parents’ bad memories of each other, he can save their marriage. But the bad memories then enter Benjie, and he feels the resentment towards his two parents that they once felt for each other.



“*The Memory Thief* explores what happens when memories that are near and dear to you are erased,” Hamessley said. “It explores the power of memory and family, with some magic and adventure thrown in the mix.”

Last up was Tucker Stone, U.S. sales and marketing director for Nobrow/Flying Eye Books, who presented *The Journey* (September), a picture book by Francesca Sanna that had already created some buzz at BEA even before the panel. It has also been awarded a Gold Medal in the book category by the Society of Illustrators. Nobrow/Flying Eye Books is distributed in the U.S. by Consortium.



Sanna is an Italian woman who visited in 2014 a refugee center near her home in Italy that was receiving 200 Syrian refugees each day. She decided to interview newly orphaned children about their experiences losing their parents and their homes, and having to flee to another country. A student in art at the Academy of Lucerne, she also wanted to draw the experiences of the refugee children who spoke to her.

“She wanted to write a story that would create empathy in a child who hasn’t experienced being a refugee,” Stone said, and she also wanted to reassure children who were being relocated that they “can go somewhere else and be okay and rebuild.”

“Every day, we hear in the news, we hear about ‘migrants,’ and ‘refugees,’ she said, “but we don’t hear about their experiences. This is the book I’m proudest of having worked on in my three years at Nobrow.”