March 2015

Dear Young Author:

Congratulations! In recognition of your writing efforts, you have been selected to represent your school district at the 41st Annual Illinois Statewide Young Authors Conference to be held Saturday, May 16, 2015, at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois.

Please bring your original manuscript with you to the conference. The official conference seal will be given to you to be placed on your original manuscript. During the day, you will have an opportunity to share your original manuscript with other young authors.

To assist you and your family in planning for the conference, we have included the following with this document:

- Check-in information for students in Kindergarten through Grade 6
- Check-in information for students in Grades 7 and 8
- Complete conference schedule
- Biographies of the Illinois authors and entertainers who are participating in the conference
- Frequently asked questions about the conference

The following documents can be found at: http://www.illinoisreadingcouncil.org/yac.html
- Directions to Illinois State University
- Bloomington-Normal Area Hotel Map
- Young Authors Facilities & Parking Map
- Campus Area Restaurants Map

I hope you will enjoy the activities we have planned for you at the 41st Annual Illinois Statewide Young Authors Conference.

Sincerely,

Christina Podraza, Ed.D.
Young Author’s Conference Coordinator
Illinois Language & Literacy Council

Please “like” us on Facebook for more information on the conference as well as an opportunity to interact with other young authors from around the state!
CONFERENCE CHECK-IN INFORMATION

Students in Kindergarten through Grade 6

On the day of the conference you should report to the Ballroom in the Bone Student Center at 9:00 a.m. for student check-in, where you will receive your room assignment and conference materials. Group Leaders will be in the ballroom as well holding placards displaying each group's room number. Following student check-in, the K-6 Group Leaders will escort their groups to the Opening Ceremony in Braden Auditorium at 9:30 a.m. Families of participants are invited to the Opening Ceremony as well. From there, students will walk with their group leader to the assigned rooms. Parents will remain in Braden Auditorium at this time to enjoy their guest speaker.

Students in Grades 7-8

On the day of the conference you should report to University High School at 9:00 a.m. for student check-in, where you will receive your room assignment and conference materials. Following student check-in, there will be an Opening Ceremony for all 7th and 8th grade participants and their families at University High School at 9:30 a.m. From there, you will walk with your group leader to your assigned rooms. Parents will go to Braden Auditorium in the Bone Student Center at this time to enjoy their guest speaker.

Please refer to http://maps.illinoisstate.edu/ for more information on parking and directions to campus.
41st Annual Illinois Statewide Young Authors Conference

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE
May 16, 2015

9:00 a.m.  Student Check-In
Kindergarten through Grade 6
Ballroom, Bone Student Center (BSC)

Grades 7 and 8
University High School, Stroud Auditorium

9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.  Opening Ceremony and Welcome
Kindergarten through Grade 6
Braden Auditorium, Bone Student Center

Grades 7 and 8
University High School, Stroud Auditorium

10:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  Small Group Sessions and Author Visits

12:00 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.  Lunch for all Students
Kindergarten through Grade 6
Large Prairie Room, Bone Student Center

Grades 7 and 8
University High School

12:50 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.  Special Sessions with Story Tellers and Author Panels
K-Grade 2  Room 130, Schroeder Hall
Grades 3 and 4  Ballroom, Bone Student Center
Grades 5 and 6  Braden Auditorium, Bone Student Center
Grades 7 and 8  Stroud Auditorium, University High School

1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.  Recognition of Young Authors/Closing Ceremonies
K-Grade 2  Room 130, Schroeder Hall
Grades 3 and 4  Ballroom, Bone Student Center
Grades 5 and 6  Braden Auditorium, Bone Student Center
Grades 7 and 8  Stroud Auditorium, University High School

3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  Author Book Signing (Optional Event)
Barnes & Noble University Bookstore, Bone Student Center

Parent Session
10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.  Parent Session with Dr. Debra Gurvitz
Braden Auditorium, Bone Student Center

Please Note: Parents and family members are then on their own for lunch and have free time until the recognition ceremonies begin at 1:30 p.m.
Carolyn Crimi enjoys snacking, Zumba, pugs, Halloween, and writing, although not necessarily in that order. She was the surprised recipient of the Prairie State Award in 2012. Over the years she has published thirteen funny books for children, including *Don’t Need Friends, Henry and the Buccaneer Bunnies, Where’s My Mummy?, Rock ‘N’ Roll Mole, and Pugs in a Bug*. She visits over 50 schools and libraries all over the country each year, but she never tires of hearing kids laugh. Her proudest moment came from a second grader who declared her to be a “Very Silly Grown-Up.” Her pug Emerson agrees.


Julia Durango writes picture books, novels, and poetry for all ages. *Under the Mambo Moon*, her poetry collection about Latin American music, received starred reviews and is a finalist for the Texas Bluebonnet Award. Her novel, *Sea of the Dead*, garnered the Golden Kite fiction award and a Parents Choice silver medal, while *The Walls of Cartagena* was named a Sydney Taylor Notable Book and Americas Award Honorable Mention. She is currently co-authoring *The Second Guard* fantasy series for Disney-Hyperion.


Tom Watson, author of the *Stick Dog* series, lives in Chicago with his wife, daughter, son and dog. He wanted to name the dog ‘Put Your Shirt On’ (please don’t ask why), but he was out-voted. The dog’s name is Shadow. Early in his career Tom worked in politics, including a stint as the Chief Speechwriter for the Governor of Ohio. This experience helped him develop the unique, storytelling narrative style of the series. Tom’s time in politics helped him realize kids are way smarter than adults. *Stick Dog Chases a Pizza*, the third book, comes out July 8.
**Grades 5-6**

**Judy Fradin** is the author, along with her late husband Dennis, of dozens of children’s and YA non-fiction books. The Fradins’ *Stolen Into Slavery* (National Geographic Children’s Books) won this year’s Carter G. Woodson Award for multicultural literature from the National Council for the Social Studies. Their 2013 picture book, *The Price of Freedom*, is illustrated by Eric Velasquez. Another recent Fradin book is *Tornado!* Judy has a spectacular slide presentation for her Witness to Disaster series as well as for the Fradin Underground Railroad books.

**Gayle Rosengren** was born in Chicago and graduated with honors in Creative Writing from Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. She worked in the Children’s Department of Bolingbrook’s Fountaindale Library and was soon chosen to head the Young Adult Department, where she created an inviting space and compelling programs for teens. Like the main character in her novel, Gayle eventually moved to Wisconsin. She published stories in children’s magazines while she worked on a novel inspired by events in her mother’s childhood during the Depression. The result? Her debut novel *What the Moon Said* (Putnam, February 20, 2014).

**Adam Selzer** is the author of several books; roughly an even mix of young adult novels and adult nonfiction, including his new *Ghosts of Chicago*. His best known novels are *How to Get Suspended and Influence People* and *I Kissed a Zombie and I Liked It*. This August, Simon and Schuster will bring out *Play Me Backwards*, which he refers to as “a novel for young adults who worship the devil.” (He’s kidding.) He speaks about the stranger side of Chicago history at schools, on the radio, and on television, in addition to running roughly 250 ghost tours per year in downtown Chicago. See him online at adamselzer.com.

**Grades 7-8**

**Kat Falls’ first** novel for young adults, *Inhuman*, was called a “nail-biting start of a new trilogy … Readers will find themselves drawn into Lane’s story through the author’s consistent worldbuilding and striking turns of phrase” in a starred review from *Kirkus*. She is also the author of the science fiction novels for middle grade readers, *Dark Life* and its sequel, *Rip Tide*. A graduate of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, she holds an MFA in screenwriting from Northwestern University, where she now teaches. She lives in Illinois with her husband and three children.

**Eric Kahn Gale** attended elementary school in Michigan where he was intensely bullied. He thought there must be something wrong with him that was drawing all this cruelty. When he changed school districts, he saw a few select kids at the new school were being treated like he had been and it dawned on him that perhaps there wasn’t anything wrong with him, but that children had a need to put someone on the bottom. Fifteen years later, that insight led to his first novel, *The Bully Book*. He lives in Chicago where he has just finished editing his second novel.

Storytellers and Parent Speaker
Chris Fascione performs his fun, participatory show, “Bringing Literature to Life!,” in which he acts out library books, for school assemblies, Reading Nights, libraries, and other family venues annually. Chris is a “Storytelling World” award winner, has been featured through “Reading is Fundamental” and highlighted at the Connecticut and Illinois Storytelling Festivals. As a professional storyteller/actor, Chris incorporates his acting, mime, juggling, and comedic skills to both entertain and lead children into the world of books, promoting literacy and a love of reading.  www.ChrisFascione.com

Kim Sheahan has been a central Illinois educator and storyteller for over twenty years. As the Assistant Director of Education at the Spurlock Museum, a museum of world cultures at the University of Illinois (Urbana), she incorporates oral traditions into a wide variety of multicultural and historical programs. As a freelance teller, she adds to her folktale shows two one-woman performances: “She Outranks Me,” celebrating Civil War nurse Mary Ann Bickerdyke, and “A Place to Live,” which honors civil rights leader Anne Braden. Kim has performed at the National Storytelling Conference, the Northlands Storytelling Network Conference, the Big Grove Storytelling Festival, and the Illinois State Fair, as well as school assemblies, city-wide celebrations, personal parties, and gatherings of all kinds. Her enthusiasm is both unmistakable and contagious. Let her share the joy and power of the tale with you in your classrooms or at your next special event.  www.kimsheahan.com

David Finch is a humorist and author of the acclaimed New York Times best selling memoir, The Journal of Best Practices. Married in 2003 and diagnosed five years later with Asperger Syndrome, David has committed himself to relentless self-improvement, sometimes to a comical extent. A former semiconductor engineer turned full-time writer and speaker, David has written for The New York Times, Huffington Post, and Slate, and he writes a relationship blog for Psychology Today. But his greatest accomplishment by far has been learning how to thrive as a family man.
QUESTIONS WE’VE BEEN ASKED

Each year we receive many calls from parents and other adults who plan to accompany students to the Young Authors Conference. This year we’re attempting to anticipate your concerns and answer some of the questions you may have about your child’s participation.

**How will my child be supervised at the Conference?**

Each young author is assigned to a small group of 10-15 young authors of the same age. Each group will be supervised by a volunteer leader and assistant group leader. Most of these volunteers are currently elementary teachers; others may be university professors, librarians, etc. All have given generously of their time and energy to make the Conference a success. The volunteer leaders stay with their groups throughout the entire day, including lunch, until the young authors meet their parents at the end of the recognition ceremony.

**Will my child receive lunch at the Conference?**

Yes. All young authors will be served a pizza lunch with a cookie. The cost of lunch is included in the registration fee, which was paid when students were registered for the Conference.

**What should my child wear to the Conference?**

We suggest that children wear clothing that will be comfortable as they move through the day’s activities. Please keep in mind that the young authors may move from one building to another so a warm jacket and comfortable shoes might be a good idea.

**May I stay with my child throughout the day?**

We ask you not to remain with your child after the young author reports to his or her classroom at the beginning of the day. As explained previously, the young authors will be well supervised.

**I have other children who are not young authors. May they stay with my child who is a young author?**

No. We cannot accommodate children other than the young authors.

**What is there for parents and other adults to do while the young authors meet?**

We have planned a session for adults accompanying children to the Conference. (See Conference Schedule for details.) Additionally, parents are welcome to sit at the back of the auditorium during the afternoon sessions (the storytelling sessions for grades K-2 and 3-4 and the author panels for grades 5-6 and 7-8), and, of course, parents are especially welcome during the Recognition Ceremonies.

If you have other questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Illinois Literacy Council representative Christina Podraza at cpodraza@naperville203.org or Sue Anderson at anderbrose@aol.com. Illinois State University Conference Services at 800/877-1478.
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