

# Come Listen, Watch, Vote

Children Who Attend Union's Family Reading Night Can Help Select This Year's MISSOURI BUILDING BLOCK PICTURE BOOK AWARD WINNER

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By Karen Cernich, Features Editor

"Pete the Cat" is back, this time with "Four Groovy Buttons," and so is Mo Willem's Pigeon, who currently is outraged over how unfair it is that "The Duckling Gets a Cookie!?" just by asking for it politely.

You may know these couple of characters by name — they are both popular and beloved in the world of children's picture books, which makes it no surprise that they are among the 10 titles nominated for this year's Missouri Building Block Picture Book Award.

The award, administered by the Youth Services Community of Interest of the Missouri Library Association, is presented annually to the author and illustrator of the picture book voted most popular by preschool children in Missouri's public libraries. First given in 1996, the award is designed to encourage reading aloud to children from birth through kindergarten age.

The list of contenders begins each year with anywhere between 70 to 140 books nominated by librarians across the state, said Christy Schink, youth services librarian with Scenic Regional Library in Union who also has served on the Building Block Award committee for 10 years.

Schink and other committee members take that massive list of picture books and read all of them to narrow the list down to the top 30. Next they read them aloud — as children's picture books are intended to be — to select the top 10.

Finally, the winner is decided by a vote among the books' target audience: young readers.

Voting began Sept. 1 and continues through Dec. 31.

Children can vote in a number of ways, including online at [www.kclibrary.org/kids/missouri-building-block-2013](http://www.kclibrary.org/kids/missouri-building-block-2013) or, beginning in November, at Scenic Regional Library branches. Before they can vote, however, children need to have heard or read at least five of the 10 nominated stories.

Scenic Regional in Union has been featuring one of each of the 10 nominees in its weekly story time sessions, but kids will get a chance to hear all 10 stories in one evening when the library hosts its annual Family Reading Night Friday, Nov. 8, at Union High School.

The event is free and open to the public. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

## **Free Books, Crafts, Voting**

The first 150 children through the doors at Family Reading Night will receive a free book — all previous Building Block Award winners.

There will be several tables of craft activities relating to children's books, as well as reading areas where students from East Central College's student Missouri State Teachers Association chapter will be reading each of the 10 books nominated for this year's Building Block Award.

Voting booths will be set up in the lobby area where children can vote on their favorite story, said Christy Schink, Scenic's children's librarian. There will be regular ballots for older children to select their favorite and sticker ballots for younger children.

Their votes, along with those of children all over the state, will be tallied once the poll closes Dec. 31 to select the winner.

The Missouri Building Block Picture Book Award, administered by the Children's Services Round Table of the Missouri Library Association, is designed to encourage reading aloud to children from birth through kindergarten age, said Schink. The award process, with its list of 10 nominees, is meant to give parents and caregivers suggestions on quality books they can read with their children, she said, noting the list is selected by children's librarians.

The 10 2013 Building Block Award nominees are:

"I'm Bored," written by Michael Ian Black and illustrated by Debbie Ridpath Ohi;

"Cat Secrets," written and illustrated by Jef Czekaj;

"Who's Who?" written by Ken Geist and illustrated by Henry Cole;

"Oh No, George!" written and illustrated by Chris Haughton;

"It's a Tiger!" written by David LaRochelle and illustrated by Jeremy Tankard;

"Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons," written by Eric Litwin and illustrated by James Dean;

"One Special Day: A Story for Big Brothers and Sisters," written by Lola M. Schaefer and illustrated by Jessica Meserve;

"Find a Cow Now," written and illustrated by Janet Stevens;

"Let's Sing a Lullaby With the Brave Cowboy," written and illustrated by Jan Thomas; and

"The Duckling Gets a Cookie!?" written and illustrated by Mo Willems.

## Stories on Stage

In between making crafts and listening to the Building Block nominee stories read aloud, children and families will be able to see two of those stories brought to life when Union High School drama students in Cathy Kapusciak's class act out "Find a Cow Now" and "Cat Secrets" on stage in the UHS theater.

The students selected those two books because they felt they could develop those into scripts with many characters for the children, said Kapusciak. That's part of the challenge for the drama students — writing scripts, finding costumes, creating sets . . .

The drama students also have selected two nominees to be "Do As I Do" books that families in the audience can follow along with, mimicking the action.

The theater presentations are expected to begin at 7 p.m.

The drama students have a lot of fun being part of the Family Reading Night entertainment, but it's also a learning experience for them, said Kapusciak.

"It covers a unit of instruction that is called Children's Theater, and they learn how different this unit is compared to units such as monologues and blocking notations," she explained.

"It is important for them to understand real life situations where what they have learned in class can be put into action. They learn about script writing and the entire process of play production by having to put it all into action from beginning to end."

The process drives home the reality of how much work it really takes to create a play from scratch.

Another lesson learned for the drama students is how specialized the performance aspect of children's theater is in acting style (many play animals) and also the level of vocabulary for a younger audience has to be kept at the forefront of their minds, said Kapusciak.

The project also creates a challenge for Kapusciak each year, particularly with finding costumes for the various animals represented each year.

As they've been preparing for this year's Family Reading Night, the drama students have been excited about sharing what they have created for the children, but now that the event is drawing nearer, they are beginning to get nervous, Kapusciak noted.

"Because this is being done by my drama class, many of the students have not had a lot of on-stage experience," she said. "For some of these students this is the first and maybe the last time they will ever perform on a theater stage."