

News Release

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Literary festival to offer plenty for kids

CHAPEL HILL – R.L. Stine will give Carolina kids goose bumps.

Kids will see and hear best-loved children's authors and say "Hi" to a walking talking Clifford the Big Red Dog. They can make masks of favorite book characters, join in a Kids Character Parade, make puppets and draw pictures to illustrate a story.

Kids 12 and under will enjoy all of the above and more at the North Carolina Literary Festival Sept. 10-13 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Children's activities and authors will be featured on Saturday, Sept. 12 and Sunday, Sept. 13. Thirteen children's storytellers, authors and illustrators will take the children's main stage, and an area just for kids will be chock-full of activities.

"We are pleased and honored that R.L. Stine, one of the most widely recognized children's authors, will participate, along with Judy Schachner, famous for her Skippyjon Jones series, and Brian Pinkney, a distinguished author and illustrator," said festival director Amy Baldwin. "And the new works that will be shared by our North Carolina children's authors are equally thrilling."

Other children's authors and storytellers just announced include Clay Carmichael, Barbara Duncan, Kathi Littlejohn, Carrie Ryan, Alan Gratz and John Claude Bemis. Ronald McDonald will even make an appearance and read to the children.

Remaining authors for the festival, designed for all ages, will be announced later this summer. The libraries of UNC and Duke and North Carolina State universities, with additional support from N.C. Central University, organize and sponsor the festival, whose location rotates biennially among the Carolina, Duke and NCSU campuses. Since the festival began, it has been held in 1998 and 2002 at Carolina, 2004 at NCSU and 2006 at Duke. The N.C. Literary Festival is supported by private gifts and grants.

This year's children's area, outside Bynum Hall and South Building, will include a main stage where authors, illustrators and storytellers will read and answer questions from the audience. The area also will include a performance stage for puppet theater, musicians, storytellers and mini-theatrical performances from children's books.

Players from the NBA, WNBA, Carolina Hurricanes, Carolina RailHawks and Durham Bulls will read stories, give autographs and share team give-aways.

In an activity tent, kids can post the names of their favorite books; write a short story based on an illustration; get their faces painted; make character masks and puppets and more.

The fun will begin with the Kids Character Parade at 9:15 a.m. Sept. 12, led by character mascots and children's authors. Children are invited to dress as their favorite book characters and join the procession.

Children also are asked to bring new or slightly used books to donate to a reading area, which will be walled off with bookcases and hosted by the Book Fairy, who after the festival, will donate the books to the pediatric oncology center at UNC Hospitals.

Mascots and book characters cavorting about will include Clifford the Big Red Dog; Little Critter; the Berenstain Bear Parents; UNC's Rameses, the Duke University Blue Devil, Mr. Wuf from NCSU and Eddie the Eagle from N.C. Central; mascots for the Bulls, the Hurricanes and the RailHawks; Booker from the Durham Public Library; and the cow from Chick-fil-A.

Chick-fil-A will sponsor the children's area on Sept. 12 and McDonalds on Sept. 13. Representatives of both restaurants will give away prizes and coupons on their respective days. From the performance stage on Sunday, Ronald McDonald will perform magic tricks; talk and sing with children about the importance of reading, writing, illustrating and being creative; and provide give-aways for all children present.

Volunteers from the community and the UNC School of Education will be on hand to assist children with the various activities. The activities and performance stage are sponsored by the community organizations Kidzu, Think It Ink It, Community Independent School, Hats Off Theatre, Carolina Parent Magazine and the Durham Public Library. All will have information tables in the children's area.

The schedule for the children's main stage is as follows:

Saturday, Sept. 12

9:15 a.m.: Kids Character Parade
10 a.m.: Brian Pinkney
11: 10 a.m.: Judy Schachner
12:20 p.m.: Clay Carmichael
1:30 p.m.: Barbara Duncan and Kathi Littlejohn
2:40 p.m.: R.L. Stine
3:50 p.m. Carrie Ryan

Sunday, Sept. 13

11:10 a.m.: Three NBA and WNBA players, all graduates of Carolina, Duke and NCSU
12:20 p.m.: Ronald McDonald

1:30 p.m.: Alan Gratz

2:40 p.m.: John Claude Bemis

Author capsule biographies are as follows, in order of appearance:

Brian Pinkney: <http://www.brianpinkney.net>

Annual Caldecott Honors from the American Library Association (ALA) and the Association for Library Service to Children recognize illustrators of the most distinguished picture books published in the United States, and Pinkney won twice. “The Faithful Friend” (Simon and Schuster, 1995) by Robert D. San Souci, and “Duke Ellington: The Piano Prince and His Orchestra” (Hyperion Books, 1997), by Pinkney’s wife, Andrea Davis Pinkney, won the honors.

Books he has written and illustrated include “Hush, Little Baby” (HarperCollins, 2005), “Cosmo and the Robot” (Greenwillow, 2000), “JoJo’s Flying Side Kick” (Simon & Schuster, 1995), and the winner of the 1997 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, “The Adventures of Sparrowboy” (Simon & Schuster, 1997).

Pinkney’s participation in the festival is sponsored by the Susan Steinfest Memorial Lecture in Children’s Literature in the UNC School of Information and Library Science.

Judy Schachner, <http://www.judithbyronschachner.com>

Schachner’s best-known books follow the adventures of Skippyjon Jones, a perky Siamese kitten – “Skippyjon Jones in the Doghouse” (Puffin, 2007), “Skippyjon Jones Color Crazy” (Dutton Juvenile, 2007), “Skippyjon Jones: A Surprise for Mama” (Grosset & Dunlap, 2008) and “Skippyjon Jones and the Big Bones,” published by Dutton Juvenile this year.

Schachner, a former greeting card designer, had her first picture book, “Willy and May” (Dutton Juvenile) published in 1995. She went on to write and illustrate “Mr. Emerson’s Cook” (Dutton Children’s Books, 1998) “I Know a Lady Who Swallowed a Pie” (Puffin, 2002) and “Yo Vikings” (Dutton Juvenile, 2002).

Clay Carmichael, <http://claycarmichael.com>

A native of Chapel Hill, N.C., Carmichael attended Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass., then graduated with highest honors in creative writing from UNC. She is the author-illustrator of the new novel “Wild Things” (Front Street Press, 2009) and award-winning picture books published by North-South: “Bear at the Beach” (1998), “Used-Up Bear” (2000) and “Lonesome Bear” (2001).

Carmichael’s bear books have been translated into many languages. She also was a contributor to “The Secret to Their Success: How 33 Women Made Their Dreams Come True” (Carolina Women’s Press, 2000). Now at work on a young adult novel, Carmichael

also promotes and teaches writing and illustrating in schools. She lives in Carrboro, N.C., with her husband, sculptor Mike Roig, and two spoiled cats.

Barbara Duncan

Barbara R. Duncan, who has a doctoral degree in folklore, works as education director at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian in Cherokee, N.C. Her 1998 book, “Living Stories of the Cherokee” (UNC Press), received the Thomas Wolfe Literary Award from the Western North Carolina Historical Association in Asheville and the World Award from Storytelling Magazine.

The “Cherokee Heritage Trails Guidebook” (UNC Press, 2003), which Duncan co-wrote, received the Preserve America Presidential Award – a federal award for efforts to preserve cultural and natural heritage – and the Willie B. Parker Peace History Award from the North Carolina Society of Historians.

Last year Duncan released her first book of poetry, “Crossing Cowee Mountain” (New Native Press). She recently co-edited “Culture, Crisis & Conflict: Cherokee British Relations,” a book of scholarly essays published by the Museum of the Cherokee Indian.

Duncan’s latest book is “Origins of the Milky Way” (UNC Press, 2008). The North Carolina Folklore Society awarded Duncan the Brown Hudson Award for her contributions to North Carolina folklife in 2008. Duncan also is a singer and songwriter. She lives in the mountains of western North Carolina.

Kathi Littlejohn

Kathi Littlejohn was born and raised in Cherokee, N.C.. She is an enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee and lives in Cherokee with her husband, Leroy, and son, Justice. She has been telling stories of the Cherokee since 1984.

Littlejohn has been a featured storyteller at the National Museum of the American Indian, a part of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and in colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. She has performed most recently at Red Clay, Tenn., at the historic 25th anniversary of the Joint Council of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Nation and the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.

R.L. Stine, <http://www.rlstine.com>

Robert Lawrence Stine started writing joke books for his friends at school when he was 9 and has been writing ever since. His work is read all over the world, selling more than 350 million books and making him one of the best-selling children’s authors in history.

Stine has said that he has always loved to write funny stuff and make kids laugh. For 10 years, he edited a humor magazine, and later he was head writer for a funny Nickelodeon TV show, “Eureka’s Castle.” In 1986, Stine turned scary. His first teen horror novel,

“Blind Date” (Scholastic Paperbacks, 1987), became an instant bestseller. In 1989, he created “Fear Street,” the best-selling young adult book series in history. He has written more than 100 books in the series, including “Fear Street,” “Fear Street Sagas” and “Ghosts of Fear Street.”

Stine’s 100-book “Goosebumps” series began in 1992 and became a hit around the world. Translated into 32 different languages, the books made Stine a worldwide publishing celebrity. The “Goosebumps” TV show was the No. 1 kids’ show in the U.S. for three years. Cartoon Network has been rebroadcasting the series since last fall.

Stine is writing a new, 12-volume series, “Goodbumps HorrorLand.” It features classic characters such as Slappy, the evil dummy, and The Haunted Mask, as well as new characters. The first two books, “Revenge of the Living Dummy” and “Creep from the Deep,” were published in April 2008 and received prominent coverage in The New York Times and a starred review in Publisher’s Weekly.

“Rotten School,” Stine’s hit book series for kids, stars charming conniver Bernie Bridges and is set at a boarding school run by Headmaster I. Will Upchuck; fourth grade teacher Mrs. Heinie; and Coach Manly Bunz. “Rotten School” is in development as a feature film at Fox. Stine also wrote the story for the 4-D movie at Busch Gardens and Sea World parks, “R.L. Stine’s Haunted Lighthouse.” Stine’s “The Haunting Hour: Don’t Think About It” is out on DVD from Paramount.

Stine’s other series include “Dangerous Girls,” “The Nightmare Room” and “Mostly Ghostly.” He likes to travel, visit schools and talk about reading. He sets up writing workshops in schools in his hometown of Columbus, Ohio. He even traveled to Russia with former First Lady Laura Bush to talk to Russian children in school about books and reading. Stine is proudest of the millions of kids who have learned to love reading through his books.

His awards and honors include several Nickelodeon Kids’ Choice Awards and Disney Adventures Kids’ Choice Awards. Stine has been selected by kids as one of their favorite authors for the National Education Association’s Read Across America Day. He received the first Champion of Reading Award from the Free Public Library of Philadelphia.

Stine lives in New York City with his wife, Jane, and his King Charles spaniel, Minnie.

Carrie Ryan, <http://www.carrieryan.com>

Born and raised in Greenville, S.C., Carrie Ryan is a graduate of Williams College and the Duke University School of Law. After Williams, she dabbled in an Internet start-up, then moved to Middleburg, Va., and worked at the Foxcroft School. That’s where she finished her first book and wrote her second.

Ryan tried to convince agents that they really wanted a sensual Western historical romance, but they were quite adamant that they did not. She then decided to write chick

lit, as Ryan puts it, but unfortunately, most such books showcased exciting city life, and Ryan's life was pretty boring in the Virginia countryside.

She came up with the brilliant plan of going to law school and getting a job in a big city so she could have an exciting life from which to draw. At Duke, Ryan met her fiancé, J.P., a speculative fiction writer who taught her all about true love. J.P. convinced Ryan to go to her first zombie movie, the remake of "Dawn of the Dead." It fascinated Ryan, and J.P. fanned the fires with more zombie movies and a timely gift of "The Zombie Survival Guide" (which he read out loud to her every night).

After graduating, they moved to Charlotte, N.C., and embarked on a plan to get serious about writing. After Ryan made a few attempts at writing for women, J.P. convinced her to write what she loved. So she started writing about zombies. There are many movies about the days and weeks after a zombie apocalypse, but Ryan wanted to know what happened much later – generations later. "The Forest of Hands and Teeth" (Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2009) is her first published novel, and she's excited to be writing more novels set in the same world.

Sunday, Sept. 13

NBA Cares

Through the festival's partnership with the NBA Cares program, two NBA players and one WNBA player – graduates of Carolina, Duke and NCSU – will read stories; discuss the importance of reading, writing and teamwork; answer questions and then sign autographs.

Ronald McDonald

Ronald McDonald will talk and sing with the children about the importance of reading, writing, illustrating and using their imagination. He also will perform magic tricks and provide give-a-ways to some of the children in attendance.

Alan Gratz, <http://www.alangratz.com>

Gratz was born and raised in Knoxville, Tenn. He attended the University of Tennessee, where he earned a college scholars degree with a specialization in creative writing, and later, a master's degree in English education.

Besides writing plays, magazine articles, and a few episodes of A&E's "City Confidential," Gratz has taught catapult-building to middle-schoolers, written more than 6,000 radio commercials, sold books and lectured at a Czech university.

His first novel, "Samurai Shortstop," appeared in 2006 from Dial Books, which has remained his publisher. "Samurai" was named one of the ALA's 2007 Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults. His second novel, "Something Rotten" (2007), was a 2008 ALA Quick Pick for Young Adult Readers. A sequel, "Something Wicked" (2008), hit shelves in October 2008.

Gratz's first true middle grade novel, "The Brooklyn Nine," debuted last March, just in time for baseball season. His short fiction has appeared in Knoxville's Metropulse magazine and in Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine.

Gratz lives with his wife, Wendi, and his daughter, Jo, in the western North Carolina mountains, where he enjoys reading, eating pizza and, perhaps not too surprisingly, watching baseball.

John Claude Bemis, <http://www.johnclaudebemis.com>

The author of "The Nine Pound Hammer" (Random House, 2009), Bemis grew up in rural eastern North Carolina. He loved reading Jack folk tales and African American trickster stories, as well as fantasy and science-fiction classics. A songwriter and musician in the Americana roots band Hooverville, he found inspiration for his fiction in old-time country and blues music and the Southern folklore at its heart. Bemis lives with his family in Hillsborough.

N.C. Literary Festival Web site: <http://www.ncliteraryfestival.org/>

Note: Baldwin can be reached at (919) 843-5615 or amy_baldwin@unc.edu.

Photo URLs:

Brian Pinkney:

<http://uncnews.unc.edu/images/stories/news/arts/2009/brian%20pinkney.jpg>

Judy Schachner:

<http://uncnews.unc.edu/images/stories/news/humanities/2009/judy%20schachner.jpg>

Clay Carmichael:

<http://uncnews.unc.edu/images/stories/news/humanities/2009/clay%20carmichael.jpg>

Barbara Duncan:

<http://uncnews.unc.edu/images/stories/news/humanities/2009/barbara%20duncan.jpg>

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