

News - May 3, 2019

Author Day inspires young writers at Mohr Elementary

2nd-graders see connection between schoolwork and being published

by Dolores Fox Ciardelli

Authors young and old can use a little inspiration.

To that end, volunteer Christina Gray put together the first Author Day at Mohr Elementary School last month. Six local published and non-published authors talked to students from the five second-grade classes about following their dreams.

"The visit from each author helped to create a meaningful connection between the work that students have been doing in the classroom to the reality of becoming a published author," principal Julie Berglin said. "Students had the opportunity to hear authors share their own process of developing and drafting ideas, pre-writing, editing and the stamina it takes to work through this multiple times to the rewarding end stages of book publication."

Gray, a photographer and owner of Bella Luna Studios, published her book, "Be Free Cooking: The Allergen Aware Cook," four years ago. Around that time, she began Writing & Food Fun Workshops for second-graders at Mohr, where her children attended, to inspire the young students to write and enjoy the creative process.

"In an effort to keep that momentum going, I created Author Day, where six local authors presented their own stories of perseverance," Gray said.

The visiting authors were Julie Bayless, Ilona Bray, Nanette Heffernan, Kara Navolio, Nadia Salomon and Meera Sriram.

Also on Author Day, the Rising Star section of the school library was unveiled. It has bins with photocopies of students' original manuscripts available for others to read, which gives the young authors a chance to "publish" their works, an incentive to keep writing.

"In the two short weeks since its installation, multiple manuscripts have already been 'published' with titles such as 'The Hot Dog Who Was a Lunatic,' 'Finding Pup,' 'Legos' and 'Dance and Sing Along,'" Gray said.

Principal Berglin said the author visits fostered an increased sense of excitement and confidence in the writing process for the students.

"As a result, students are writing more and showcasing their own books for others to read in our Mohr school library," she noted.

Second-grade teacher Michelle O'Connor was also enthusiastic about Author Day.

"All of the presentations were thoughtful, entertaining and educational," she said. "My class could easily

feel the overflowing amounts of love, time and pride that was put into each and every book."

The students also learned that it is OK to fail, then try and try again.

"These amazing authors clearly did not give up -- an excellent message to send to our young writers," O'Connor said. "It was truly a magical day."

