



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Grand Rapids Children's Illustrator Honored with Gwen Frostic Award

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Picture book author-illustrator Ryan Hipp will be honored with the Gwen Frostic Award at a gala ceremony on March 10, presented by the Michigan Reading Association; coinciding with the organization's annual conference at Devos Place, in Grand Rapids.

"This is the biggest statewide honor a kid-lit author can receive," Hipp said. "It is not just an award measuring good ideas or good drawings - it is being recognized for impacting the lives of kids. That is a big honor."

"The Michigan Reading Association does so much for teachers and kids in Michigan", Hipp said, "and they do so much for local authors and illustrators. I am really proud to be involved with them."

The award was established in 2006 to honor an author or illustrator who has done work that has greatly fostered literacy in Michigan. Some past recipients have been Patricia Polocco and Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen. "To be ranked with the past recipients of this award, I am flattered and humbled beyond measure.", Hipp said, "These guys are the big guns in Michigan".

According to Hipp, going to schools to talk to kids is the best part of his career. "When I was little, my school hosted a young authors week event. After that, I just knew...this was it for me". Now, Hipp gives presentations at schools and libraries across Michigan with the goal to inspire kids to read, write, draw, and engage their creative sparks. "It is really important for me to tell kids that their stories and dreams are important and need

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to be shared.”, Hipp said, “When I see students get really excited about their ideas, I can’t help but get excited for them. That was me. I always tell them I am no different.”

“My dad is a retired history teacher and my mom is a painter. I think I get a little bit from each of them”, Hipp says, “Growing up in our house, all my brothers and sisters loved reading books. We always had picture books and chapter books around. I read them over and over and got so attached to them to the point that they were precious to me even as I got older. I still have all my books.”

Making books is something that Hipp knew would be his life-long work. “I can’t even fathom not making books. Its what I am built to do”, Hipp shares, “Everyone should have at least one thing that drives them, that they are proud of. For me, its making work that young people enjoy and then seeing them be inspired to also do it themselves.”

Hipp lives in the Lost Woods, which according to Hipp cannot be found on most maps known to man. “Its the perfect place to get inspired. I don’t know what I have more of around here: awesome cats, or awesome ideas I want to make into books”.

In 2009, Hipp’s work was entered in the first ArtPrize event in Grand Rapids, MI, holding the top 25 spot during the first week. His ArtPrize paintings were then purchased and curated by the Grand Rapids Public Museum in 2010 and can be viewed on the second floor.

Hipp is most known for the books *How Much Wood Could A Woodchuck Chuck?*, and *A Curious Glimpse of Michigan*, nominated for the Great Lakes Great Books Award in 2005. The music album of the same name features the song, “I Wish I Lived in Michigan!” that was charted #1 on Kids Place Live satellite radio for several weeks when the album premiered.

Hipp’s forthcoming book, *Little Steps* will be previewed for the first time at the MRA’s 56th annual conference the same weekend he will be receiving the award. “*Little Steps* is all about how life is full of big struggles”, Hipp said, “but you just have to get through them one step at a time.”

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