

January 2021

JDLA

Newsletter

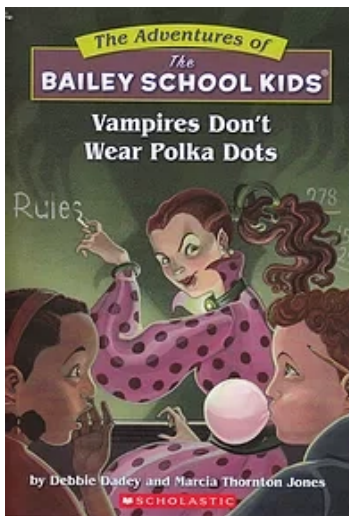
The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency Celebrates 20 Years!

Twenty years ago, native New Yorker Jennifer De Chiara began her own literary agency in her Manhattan apartment. Through her genuine love of books, sheer dedication, and unrelenting hard work, she impressively moved the agency from the drop-leaf kitchen table of her studio apartment to an office on Park Avenue. In those ensuing years, The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency has gained industry prestige with a wide range of high-quality books for adults, teens, and children, including *New York Times* bestsellers; starred book reviews; film, tv, and stage deals; foreign-language editions; a Newbery Honor book; an Edgar Award winner; a LAMBDA Award winner; and two PEN Awards. Now with over 400 clients, and with 21 employees and dedicated film and foreign teams “making dreams come true,” The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency looks with confidence to the decades ahead!

Recent Highlights

TV Option for Bestselling BAILEY SCHOOL KIDS Series

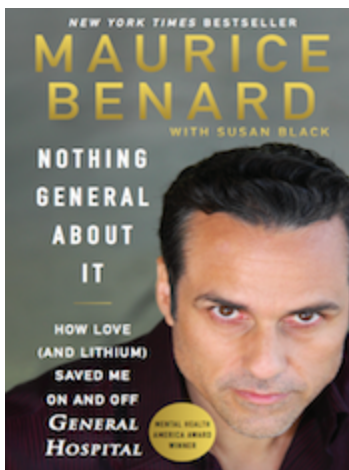
The bestselling BAILEY SCHOOL KIDS series by Debbie Dadey and Marcia Thornton Jones has been optioned for a live-action TV series by Bardel Entertainment, Inc. and Rainbow S.p.A. Brokered at auction, the deal was negotiated by Marie Lamba and Jennifer De Chiara at The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency, and film agent Stephen Moore of Paul Kohner, Inc. With more than 30 million titles sold to date, BAILEY SCHOOL KIDS reigns as one of



Scholastic's top-selling series of all time. Bardel and Rainbow will jointly produce the live-action series with Bardel's CEO Rick Mischel, independent producer Kimberly Guidone, and authors Debbie Dadey and Marcia Thornton Jones serving as Executive Producers.

Debut YA Novel Sold At Auction

Charity Alyse's young adult debut, *OTHER SIDE OF THE TRACKS*, was sold at auction to Denene Millner at Denene Millner Books, Simon & Schuster by Marlo Berliner at The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency. The book is about a racially divided town where Zach Whitman, a white boy, moves in and befriends Black siblings, Capri and Justin Collins. When one of their friends is murdered by police, the town erupts into an all-out war, with Capri, Justin, and Zach caught in the middle. Publication is slated for Fall 2022.



Maurice Benard Memoir Instant New York Times Bestseller

Two-time Emmy Award-winning actor Maurice Benard's memoir *NOTHING GENERAL ABOUT IT: How Love (and Lithium) Saved Me On and Off General Hospital*, was an instant *New York Times* bestseller and is winner of the Mental Health America Award. The memoir, which chronicles his success, show business career, and his struggle with mental illness, was sold to SVP, Director of Creative Development at HarperCollins Lisa Sharkey by

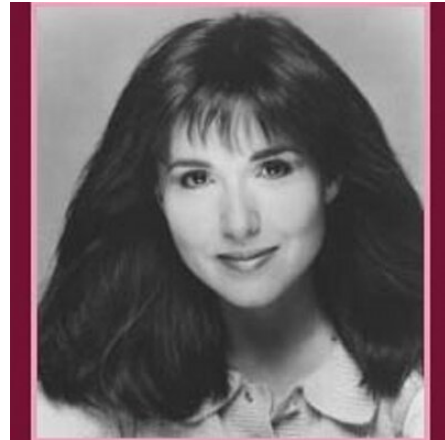
agent Jennifer De Chiara at The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency. Two-time Academy Award-winning producer of *The Godfather* Al Ruddy calls this book "gut-wrenching" and "an honest look at one man's private pain and an unconventional and inspiring love story." Stephen A. Smith of ESPN says Benard is "owed a debt of gratitude for taking us inside the roller-coaster ride that has

been his life, shining a light on mental illness and how he rose to heights from that abyss....This book is a must-read."

Spotlight on Jennifer De Chiara

Q: Happy agency anniversary, Jennifer! Twenty years ago, you founded your agency, and the rest is history. Can you speak a little about your beginnings in the publishing industry? What inspired you to create your own agency?

A: Books and writing have always been my passions. I remember being two years old and drawing circles on pieces of paper (in my mind I was writing a book), using the toilet lid as my desk. After years struggling as a dancer and actress, I thought it might be nice to have food to eat on a regular basis, so I started looking for a career that would be creative and challenging and that would bring me back to writing, and to books. I've been an underdog most of my life and I know what it's like to be on the outside looking in, wanting someone to believe in me. I started my agency to help writers achieve their dreams. Though agenting wasn't my first career, it's what I now believe I was put on this earth to do. And I still write, but I have a much nicer desk.



Q: What were some of the difficulties or challenges you faced when building up your agency?

A: When you start a literary agency, it takes time before you make enough money to live on. I was working a full-time job for years, while running my agency, sleeping about three hours a night. Those were incredibly hard days, but looking back on them now, I wouldn't change a thing. Those hardships have made me extremely grateful for everything I've achieved.

Q: In general, what is your favorite part of being an agent?

A: I believe that books change the world, in big and small ways. They inform, entertain, inspire. I love knowing that one of the books I've helped create and/or sell has possibly put a smile on someone's face or maybe impacted them in some way for the better. As I grow my agency and hire agents and assistants, it makes me happy to know that not only am I able to help even more writers achieve their dreams, but I'm also helping and inspiring my agents and assistants with their dreams as well.



Author Spotlight: Margi Preus

Margi Preus is a *New York Times* bestselling author of the Newbery Honor Book *HEART OF A SAMURAI* and other novels and picture books for young readers, including the Minnesota Book Award-winning *WEST OF THE MOON* and the Midwest Booksellers Choice Award book *THE CLUE IN THE TREES*, part of the Enchantment Lake mystery series. Her books have won multiple awards,

been honored as ALA/ALSC Notables, selected as an NPR Backseat Book Club pick, chosen for community reads, translated into several languages, and have been sold for Japanese stage and television. In ordinary times, Margi enjoys traveling, speaking, and visiting schools all over the world. She is currently offering virtual presentations and workshops.

Q: Your very first novel was *HEART OF A SAMURAI*. What sparked its writing?

A: An ancient temple bell, a trip to Japan, a librarian friend, and the book *SHIPWRECKED* by Rhoda Blumberg. All these things converged to introduce me to the remarkable life of Nakahama Manjiro, the first Japanese person to come to America. I was inspired by his spirit, his unlikely friendship with a whaling captain, and his message of peace between nations, and I felt his was a tale worth telling.

Q: What was it like to win the Newbery Honor and hit the *New York Times* bestseller list your first time published?

A: Mind-blowing! I was so thrilled just to have gotten my novel published that I didn't think beyond that. In fact, I was so convinced that no one would ever even *read* the book, much less give it any awards, that I had not attempted writing anything else. (I was teaching and directing a theater company, so it's not like I was twiddling my thumbs.) More importantly, the Newbery Honor and bestselling status gave me the confidence to take myself seriously as a writer.

Q: What is your writing routine?

A: Thanks to the pandemic, I actually kind of *have* a routine. Otherwise, I rely on having a story that has so taken over my psyche it requires me to compulsively work on it, whenever and wherever. Nowadays, though, I often go out to my writing house in the morning—now that it's cold I have to make a fire in the woodstove to warm the place up first. At some point I eat lunch and take a hike with my dog and maybe go back to work or get side-tracked by something else after that. (see the next question)

Q: What lies at the heart of all your writing?

A: Questions, probably. Mostly unanswerable ones: Why do some people rise above adversity while others are crushed by it? What makes some people willing to risk their lives to help others? What is our responsibility toward one another and the world in which we live? How do our choices shape who we become? Questions lie at the heart of every story—and in that way, every story is a mystery.

Q: Do you have any advice for beginning writers?

A: Read, of course. But read like a writer—the first time for pleasure, and the next time to analyze how that writer has made your heart pound, or the tears flow, or made you stay up way past your bedtime because you just have to keep turning the pages. How has that writer created that kind of bewitchery with just some lines and squiggles on paper? Pick it apart until you see how they did it. The real magicians are so good at it you can't figure it out. Some of us keep trying to, anyway!

Keep an eye out for Margi Preus's forthcoming books, *LILY LEADS THE WAY* (Candlewick, 2022) and *SNOWSHOE KATE* (Abrams, 2022). For more info about Margi and her upcoming works, visit www.margipreus.com.

Illustrator Spotlight: Joanna Cacao

Joanna Cacao is a Canadian Filipino with a background in 3D animation. She has taught classes in Manga and Comics and is an illustrator for the Native Winnipeg-based educational company Native Reflections. Her forthcoming graphic novel, *THE SECRET OF THE RAVENS*, will be published by Etch in the fall of 2023.

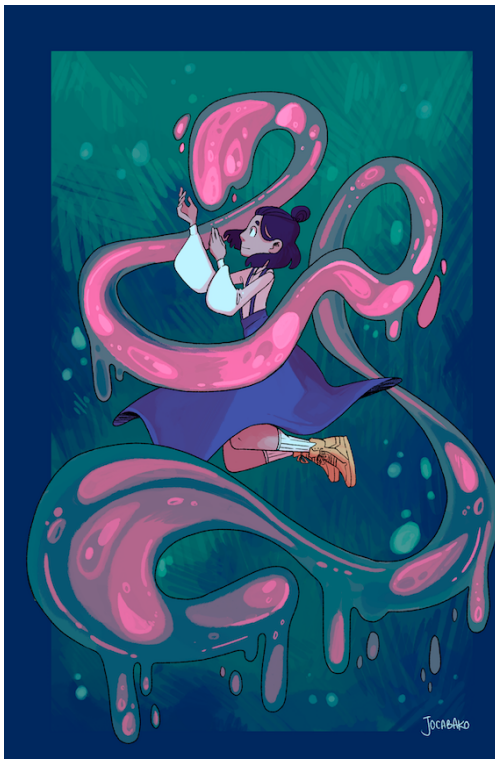


Q: What made you want to become an illustrator?

A: Drawing was my first love since I was a child. Ever since I drew my very first fan art of cartoons like The Powerpuff Girls, and Pokémon, I knew I wanted to have some sort of career involving the creative arts. However, it did take some time for me to realize that drawing was what my heart really wanted, and there wasn't a single career that I could settle for. I even tried to go into architecture, and 3D animation, and even car sales. But I'm here today, finally following my dreams.

Q: What or who has been most important in developing your personal style?

A: I grew up on cartoons and animated films, thanks to my parents putting a TV in my bedroom. My biggest inspirations by far are Disney and Ghibli films. I



specifically fell in love with their backgrounds and the stories they tell through their well-written characters.

Q: Tell us about your upcoming graphic novel, THE SECRET OF THE RAVENS.

A: THE SECRET OF THE RAVENS follows the unfortunate twins Elliot and Liza, who are trying to survive in a magical world. They're both striving toward a better life, but inevitably make immeasurable mistakes and have to navigate through the consequences. They are faced with amazing and terrifying creatures, a mysterious mage, and a selfish King who strives to create a perfect kingdom.

As the daughter of two Filipino immigrants, I wanted to shine a spotlight on my culture by utilizing some traditional fashions, tattoos, and even including Tagalog as magical spells. Growing up, I learned very little about my culture, but this project has allowed me to enlist the help of my parents to research as much as I can to make a great story that they can be proud of.

You can find more of Joanna's work at www.joannacacao.com.





To see the work of other illustrators represented by JDLA, please visit our website at www.jdlit.com/illustrators.

Watch for our next newsletter, coming soon!

The Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency

245 Park Avenue, 39th Floor
New York, NY 10167
212.372.8989
www.jdlit.com

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