

Meet Diverse Authors and Role Models

ILLUMINATING MINDS TOUR

IN-SCHOOL AND ONLINE AUTHOR
AND SPEAKER VISITS AND KEYNOTES



Aiden M. Taylor



Carmen Jorda



Hakki Akdeniz



Blake Leeper



Stéphane Matteau



Diedra Cole



Poo Bear



Stephen Ritz



Tanya Montás Paris



Quinn Cook



Domingo Zapata



Cheryl Wills



Kianny N. Antigua

Grades
K-12

**CUSTOM-DESIGNED PRESENTATIONS AND ASSEMBLIES
TO INSPIRE STUDENTS TO SEE NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR THEMSELVES:**

- Character Development
- Mental Health
- Bullying Prevention
- Parent and Family Engagement
- Equity and Social Justice
- Health and Wellness
- STEM
- Career Exploration
- Academic Success
- Building Community
- Achieving Goals
- Grit and Resilience
- Disability Awareness



To schedule an **ONLINE** or
IN-SCHOOL visit, call 212-371-9199,
or email info@lightswitchlearning.com



WELCOME TO THE ILLUMINATING MINDS TOUR!

Today's students need more than academic proficiencies. They also need to interact with positive role models who help them develop essential life skills such as resilience, confidence, empathy, leadership, and a vision for their future.

For the last decade, Sussman Education/Lightswitch Learning's Illuminating Minds Tour has inspired thousands of K-12 students and educators nationwide through dynamic In-School, Online, and Keynote presentations by award-winning authors and speakers who encourage resilience, curiosity, and achievement. These speakers include accomplished athletes, artists, musicians, entrepreneurs, educators, authors, activists, and innovators whose real-life stories inspire students to:

- **Build confidence and self-esteem**
- **Overcome challenges and setbacks**
- **Develop empathy and kindness**
- **Improve decision-making skills**
- **Explore career pathways**
- **Strengthen literacy and communication skills**
- **Foster school pride and community**
- **Believe in their ability to achieve their goals**
- **Self-manage anxiety and negative thinking**
- **Respond effectively to bullying**

Every Illuminating Minds presentation and assembly is custom-designed to inspire students to see new possibilities for themselves. The result is a unique, personal experience that leaves a meaningful and lasting impact on students' growth and development.



TESTIMONIALS FROM STUDENTS

“I want to be like you when I grow up.”

-2nd grade student

“This made learning fun.”

-4th grade student

“This is the best day of my life.”

-6th grade student

“Thanks for showing that my voice matters.”

-8th grade student

“You helped me realize that I can go to college and build a career that I love.” *-11th grade student*



TESTIMONIALS FROM EDUCATORS

“Words cannot express my gratitude!

The author visit reached all of us and truly impacted our students. Her transparency, resilience and positive mindset were a reminder to all to nurture the gifts that we are given as we never know how our story will impact others.”



“Your author was a perfect keynote speaker at our conference. He set the tone for inspiring us to persevere with positivity and patience!”

“Our Parent Center created a Welcome poster to display in the auditorium. One of our staff shared that the speaker was such a motivation to her and others!”

“The assembly with your author inspired our students to dream big and recognize their own strengths. When can we have this speaker back?”

VOICES OF IMPACT



"I was homeless, penniless, and friendless, but I was never hopeless." -Hakki Akdeniz

"Hoy ha sido enigmático, magnético y fantástico!" -Kianny N. Antigua

"Always remember how important the past is in shaping the future and how impactful you can be in making that future brighter." -Jameson Bennett

"I hope my music both helps people feel as if they are being seen for who they really are and gives them that extra positive outlook on the day."

-Jason "Poo Bear" Boyd

"Bullies are really unhappy people. They have to pick on other people to feel better about themselves." -Diedra Cole

"Never quit. That's in life. That's in anything. As long as you believe it, as long as you persevere every single day, your dreams will come true."

-Quinn Cook

"All of the negativity just makes me double down and work even harder."

-Jason Derulo

"I want girls to slide into the cockpit of a car and know they belong. If they stay true to themselves and fight for their dreams, they too can make it."

-Carmen Jorda

"By choosing compassion, by giving, by simply being kind, you've helped build something beautiful."

-The Gengel Family

In-School, In-Person Author Visits and Assemblies, and Keynote Presentations



“I’m proud of my curls, they’re fun and unique. They make me special, they’re what make me, me!” -Tori Kelly

“Navigating between two cultures taught me that identity is not about choosing one over the other—it’s about embracing all the pieces that make you who you are.”

-Shohreh Khalilova

“I no longer thought, ‘Why me?’ Instead, I lived with a different motto—Why NOT ME?” -Blake Leeper

“Don’t let the bad games bother you, but don’t let the good games bother you, either. Live the moment.”

-Stéphane Matteau

“Remember that poetry is all around us, so keep your eyes open wide!”

-Tanya Montás Paris

“Anyone can be an inventor. All you need to get started is a good idea.”

-Emberli and David Pridham

“We are a community who is often not invited to the table. So we build our own table.” -Stephen Ritz

“That’s when I uncovered important breaking news: I was the great-great-great grandchild of a Tennessee slave named Sandy Wills.” -Cheryl Wills

“My inspiration comes from every day, from what I love, from what I see.”

-Domingo Zapata



MEET OUR AUTHORS AND SPEAKERS

Our authors and speakers are available for in-person and/or online visits to schools. Please be aware that scheduling is contingent upon their commitments and availability at the time of your request. For more information on scheduling and other details, please contact your account representative or call 212-371-9199. We look forward to facilitating enriching experiences for your students.

Available for In-School and Online Visits



Hakki Akdeniz



Donna Anselmo



Kianny N. Antigua



Kobi Backer



Jameson Bennett



Jason "Poo Bear" Boyd



Judaline Cassidy



Diedra Cole



Quinn Cook



Liz Cooper



Hayley Demarest



Marie Ferraro



Britney Gengel Family



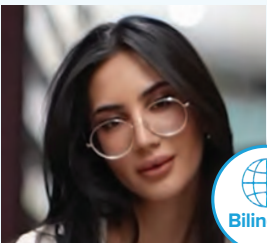
Shelley Goldberg



Brianna Greenspan



Jason Hightower



Shohreh Khalilova



Blake Leeper



Leon Logothetis



Stéphane Matteau





Marlon McRae



Pat Mitchell



Patti Newman



Tanya Montás Paris



David Pridham



Emberli Pridham



Amen Rahh



Stephen Ritz



Tyree Rush



Jared Sams



Latoya Smith



Aiden M. Taylor



Linda Taylor



Anaya Willabus



"Big Boy" Wills



Cheryl Wills

Available for Online Visits



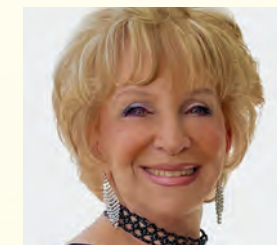
Jason Derulo



Carmen Jorda



Tori Kelly



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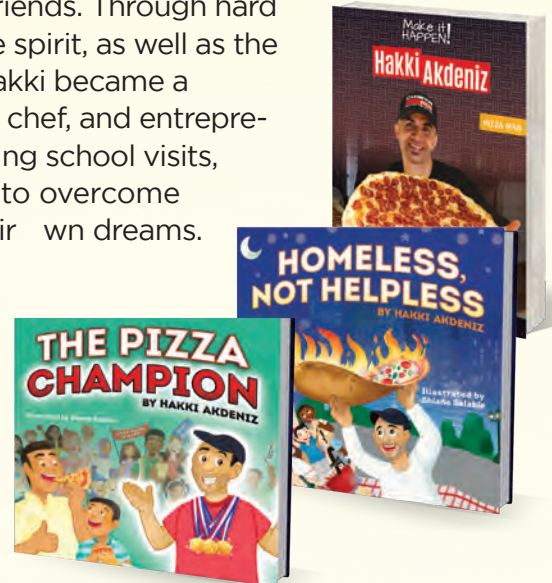
**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Hakki Akdeniz, Chef, Social Entrepreneur, and Author

After emigrating to the United States at age twenty-one, Hakki found himself homeless on the streets of New York City—with no family or friends. Through hard work and an indomitable spirit, as well as the kindness of strangers, Hakki became a well-known restaurateur, chef, and entrepreneur. Through his engaging school visits, Hakki inspires students to overcome challenges and fulfill their own dreams.

Key Messages:

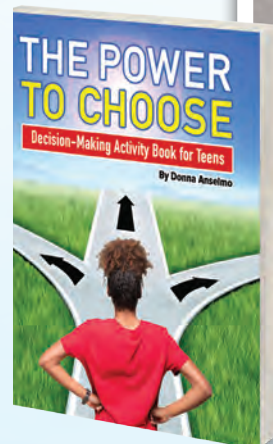
Self-confidence, goal setting, career readiness, mindfulness, and understanding differences



Donna Anselmo, Author

Donna Anselmo is passionate about helping children, teens, and adults build powerful skills for personal growth, inner satisfaction, and life success. Formerly an award-winning journalist, radio talk show host, international best-selling author, and e-learning specialist, Donna has enjoyed decades as a transformational business and community leader. She now focuses her school presentations on her lifelong desire to spark curiosity and enrich the learning journey for children and teens.

Key Messages: Decision-making, compassion, mindfulness, collaboration, critical thinking, self-management, and reflection



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Kianny N. Antigua, Educator and Author

Kianny N. Antigua is an inspiring bilingual author specializing in children's literature that celebrates girl empowerment, self-acceptance, and the beauty of our differences. After navigating a series of dead-end jobs, Kianny decided to prioritize her education to pursue her dreams. Her book *Greña Crazy Hair* won first place in the Most Inspirational Children's Picture Book category at the 2018 Latino Book Awards. Drawing from her experiences as a young Dominican girl, Kianny's dynamic presentations encourage children to embrace who they are.

**Coming
Soon!**
*Kiara Wants
A Cell
Phone*

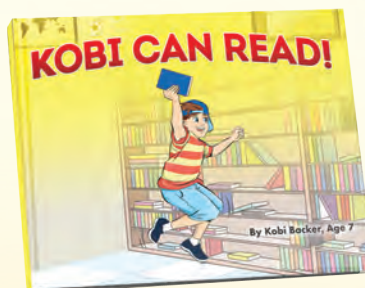


Key Messages:
Self-acceptance,
girl empowerment,
and appreciating
differences

Kobi Backer, Author

Despite facing learning challenges in kindergarten and first grade, Kobi Backer was determined to thrive in second grade and beyond. Kobi lives in Miami, Florida, with two brothers, two sisters, and a lively chihuahua. Through his presentations, Kobi shares his message of resilience and empowerment with students, showing that with hard work and support, anything is possible.

Key Messages: Literacy,
perseverance, self-motivation,
overcoming challenges,
self-regulation, and setting goals



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Jameson Bennett, Author

Jameson Bennett, a Louisville, Kentucky, native, is an award-winning radio producer and technologist. Honored at the 2022 NYF Radio Awards, Jameson brings a wealth of media expertise to his work. Through his impactful presentations, Jameson introduces students to technologies such as virtual reality and inspires their career readiness interests, leading them to a successful future.

Key Messages: History/social science literacy, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and career readiness



Jason "Poo Bear" Boyd, Songwriter and Author

Jason Boyd, aka Poo Bear, is a singer, songwriter, and record producer best known for his unforgettable melodies and collaborating with singers and songwriters from all genres to create anthems that resonate with fans all over the world. Through his work both in and out of the recording studio, Poo Bear works to inspire children to develop a positive mindset, even when faced with the toughest of obstacles. Poo Bear often greets others with "Happy Bearthday," reflecting his belief that every day should be an opportunity to grow, celebrate, and move closer to your goals. Poo's author visits help children build confidence, resilience, and the self-motivation to achieve their dreams.

Key Messages: Perseverance, self-motivation, overcoming challenges, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and goal setting



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**





**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Judaline Cassidy, Plumber

Judaline impacts lives and inspires women around the world, offering her own story of someone who overcame her challenges as a minority woman in a white-male-dominated industry. After becoming a successful plumber in New York City, Judaline founded Tools & Tiaras, a program that teaches students, especially girls, how to use tools and shows them how they can get involved in trade jobs. Judaline's presentations show students the power of perseverance and determination.

Key Messages: Overcoming bullying and discrimination, financial literacy, finding mentors, perseverance, girl empowerment, career readiness, and entrepreneurship



Diedra Cole, Author

Despite being diagnosed with cerebral palsy at the age of three months, author Diedra Cole has dedicated herself to showing that through perseverance and positivity, great things can be accomplished. Diedra's moving presentations show students her belief that regardless of differences, challenges and obstacles can be overcome.

Key Messages: Disability awareness, inclusion, kindness, perseverance, self-motivation, anti-bullying, overcoming challenges, and goal setting



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

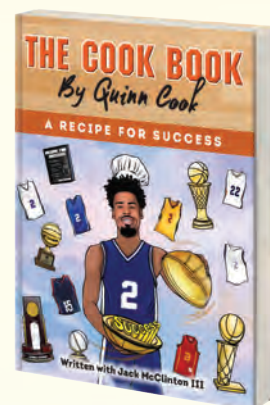
Key Messages: Perseverance, self-motivation, grieving, overcoming challenges, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and goal setting

Quinn Cook, NBA Basketball Player and Author

Concept by Chuka A. Erike

Visual Development by Milan Čolović & Chuka A. Erike

Quinn Cook is a professional basketball player and motivational speaker with a career built through hard work and discipline at every level of competition—from his backyard all the way to the NBA. As a leader on and off the basketball court, Quinn has impacted his community while also winning basketball championships at every level: high school; Duke University; as well as in the NBA with the Golden State Warriors and the Los Angeles Lakers. Inspired by his beloved father who passed away at an early age, Quinn's school visits teach students to overcome challenges and to purposefully and actively pursue their own dreams in sports, and in life.



Liz Cooper, Author

Liz Cooper is a former nurse, elementary school teacher, and school language-arts supervisor. Liz is passionate about promoting literacy, disability awareness, and kindness because as a teacher, she noticed that students with disabilities were ignored on the playground. Through her engaging school presentations, Liz aims to foster inclusivity and empathy.



Key Messages: Disability awareness, inclusion, kindness, self-awareness, compassion, problem-solving, and social awareness



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**



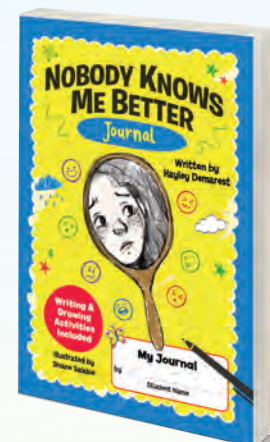
**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Hayley Demarest, Author

Hayley Demarest is a licensed family therapist, recreation therapist, and an always aspiring loyal best friend to herself. She has spent 20 years working with children and their families through traumatic life events and has been witness to the resiliency of the human spirit.

Hayley has learned that discovering and nurturing self-love shines a light when we find ourselves experiencing life challenges. Hayley's presentations are built on the belief that building self-love in childhood can create enduring strength in children.

Key Messages: Empathy, perseverance, self-motivation, overcoming challenges, self-regulation, and kindness



Jason Derulo, Singer and Author

Jason Derulo is a singer, songwriter, and performer who has sold over 250 million singles worldwide and entertained audiences around the globe. Born to Haitian immigrants, Jason developed an early interest in music after being exposed to a variety of musical genres from pop to kompa, twoubadou, and R&B. Through his aspirational author visits, Jason highlights to students how creating routines, taking risks, staying dedicated, and building self-confidence can help them achieve their dreams even in the face of adversity.



Available for Online Visits

Key Messages: Self-management, perseverance, social awareness, overcoming challenges, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and goal setting





**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Marie Ferraro, Author

Marie is inspired by her family's history of helping people to overcome great challenges and to build better lives. Her children's stories focus on messages that promote self-acceptance, diversity, and equity. Her presentations inspire children to understand the power of friendship and generosity and to respect the differences between people.

Key Messages: Friendship, understanding economic differences, social justice, equity, and expressing gratitude



Britney Gengel Family, Community Builders and Authors

Britney "Brit" Gengel was born and raised in Massachusetts with dreams of changing the world. During her sophomore year of college, she traveled to Haiti, hoping to make a difference. Soon after arriving, Brit decided that she would stay in Haiti and build an orphanage. Unfortunately, she lost her life during the destructive earthquake that devastated Haiti. The Gengel family took over Brit's mission and built an orphanage in her honor. Their presentations inspire children around the world to learn to be compassionate and kind towards others.

Key Messages: Social awareness, perseverance, self-motivation, grieving, overcoming challenges, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and goal setting



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**





**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Shelley Goldberg, TV News Reporter and Author

Shelley Goldberg was the Parenting and Family Reporter for NY1 News, where she spent over twenty years sharing valuable insights. Her work emphasizes social awareness, community building, health and wellness, nutrition, and career readiness, empowering students and parents alike. Her dedication to promoting nutritious lifestyles and informed decision-making inspires kids to take charge of their futures while fostering a healthier community. Shelley gives students the confidence to develop essential career skills while prioritizing their health and well-being.

Key Messages:
Social aware-
ness, college
and career
readiness,
nutrition, and
health and
wellness



Brianna Greenspan, Author

Brianna Greenspan has been using the power of positive affirmations for the past thirteen years to overcome physical challenges brought on by being born with a chronic invisible illness. When Brianna decided that the labels and limitations of her medical team did not align with what she believed to be possible for her life, everything began to change. Instead of being held back by neck braces, surgeries, and countless doctors' visits, Brianna completed her first 10K and hiked Half Dome at Yosemite National Park. Brianna's school visits show students that the power of positive affirmations coupled with immense effort can enable a person to overcome the biggest obstacles.

Key Messages: Mindfulness, resilience,
wellness, empathy, and setting goals



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**





**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Jason Hightower, Author

Jason Hightower is a producer/director from Houston, Texas. He has directed two shorts with his long-time collaborator, Amber Iman (*Steve*, *Blackberry Winter*). With nearly twenty years of experience in film and television, Jason has also worked on a multitude of shows, such as *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, *Good Time*, and *Fallout*. Jason's empowering presentations help students better understand technology, such as virtual reality, to enable them to consider career opportunities in STEM-related fields

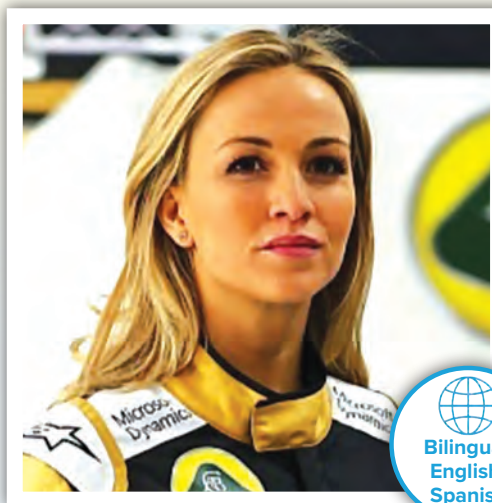
Key Messages: History/social science literacy, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and career readiness



Carmen Jorda, Race Car Driver and Author

Carmen Jorda is a Spanish race car driver, working as a Formula 1 development driver. Through hard work, determination, and teamwork, she has competed in GP3, Indy Lights, and the Le Mans series motor racing competitions. Off the race track, Carmen's school presentations inspire students, especially girls, so that they too can overcome any obstacle and fulfill their dreams.

Key Messages: Girl empowerment, STEM, career readiness, self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making




**Bilingual:
English/
Spanish**

Available for Online Visits



Available for Online Visits

Key Messages: Social awareness, self-confidence, empathy, and self-awareness

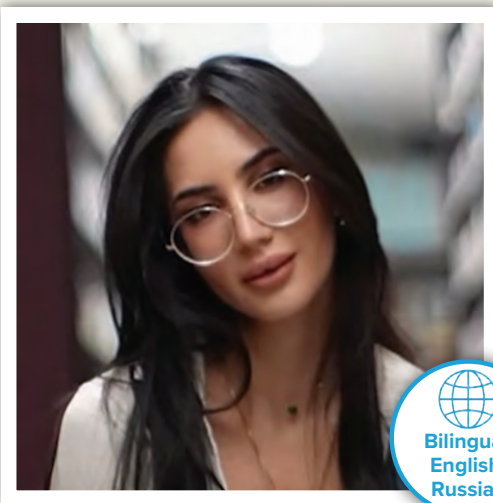
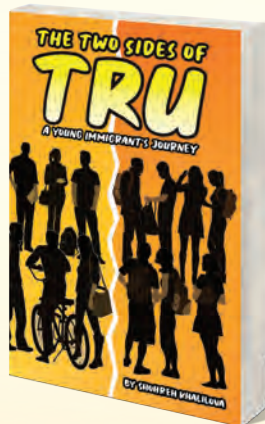
Tori Kelly, Singer and Author

Tori Kelly is a two-time Grammy Award-winning singer, songwriter, record producer, and voice actress from Wildomar, California. She has written and produced countless hits, performed in front of sold-out crowds, and was the lead voice of Meena the elephant in Illumination's *Sing* and *Sing 2* movies. Tori hopes to inspire self-confidence, kindness, and individuality with her music and books. Tori has proudly embraced her own unique history; her father is Jamaican and Puerto Rican, and her mother is of Irish and British descent. In the face of negativity and self-doubt, Tori's presentations enable students to find and cherish their uniqueness and celebrate what makes them special.



Shohreh Khalilova, Author

Shohreh Khalilova was born in Nebraska to a family from Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and grew up between contrasting cities and cultures. Frequent school changes—often to escape bullying—shaped her early years, but they also strengthened her voice and deepened her empathy. After leaving high school during her sophomore year, Shohreh continued to turn to writing as her creative refuge. Shortly after, she earned her high school diploma, studied English in college, and went on to pursue a career in digital marketing—a field that allowed her love for writing to flourish. Through her school visits, Shohreh teaches students that the journey of self-discovery is not a burden but a bridge—one that can lead them back to themselves and connect them to others.



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Key Messages: Empathy, bullying, perseverance, self-motivation, inclusion, overcoming challenges, self-regulation, and kindness



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Blake Leeper, Track Athlete and Author

Blake Leeper is an eight-time Paralympic track-and-field athlete; world record holder; and three-time American record holder. Despite being born with both legs missing below the knees, Blake has shown the world that a positive attitude, determination, and dedication can lead to achievements both on and off the track. Blake continues to break down barriers as a sprinter and works tirelessly off the track by giving motivational presentations that inspire students to realize that no dream is out of reach.

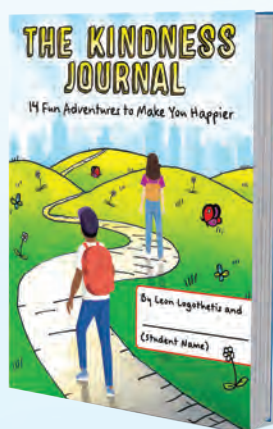
Key Messages:
Disability awareness,
inclusion,
goal setting,
self-discipline,
self-confidence,
empathy, and
perseverance



Leon Logothetis, TV Personality and Author

Leon Logothetis is a global adventurer, TV host, motivational speaker, and best-selling author who is known through his series *The Kindness Diaries*, which streams on Discovery+. For over a decade, Leon has traveled the globe to over one hundred countries to constantly inspire students with his message of kindness and hope. Through his inspirational school visits, Leon shines a light on the good in humanity and on how children of all ages can impact their lives and the lives of those around them.

Key Messages: Kindness,
compassion, mindfulness,
and connection with others



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

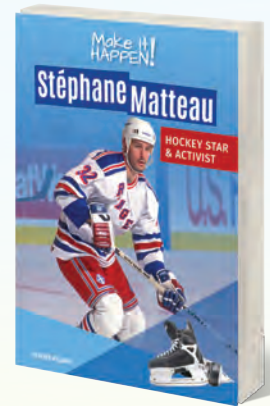


**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Stéphane Matteau, Hockey Player and Activist

Stéphane is a former New York Rangers player who scored a double-overtime goal that helped lead the team to its 1994 Stanley Cup championship. He has battled anxiety and depression. Today, he travels around the world, mentoring and teaching kids to overcome their fears in order to achieve their own goals in life.

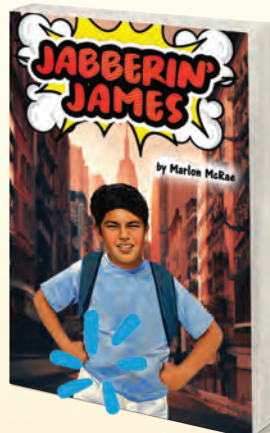
Key Messages: Overcoming anxiety and depression, gaining compassion, and setting goals



Marlon McRae, Author

Marlon McRae is a former journalist who has been featured on ESPN, CBSSportsline.com, and the *New York Amsterdam News*. As a teacher and parent, Marlon's powerful presentations inspire students to develop self-awareness and compassion for people of all diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

Key Messages: Relationship skills, overcoming discrimination, self-awareness, compassion, problem-solving, and social awareness



**Available for In-School
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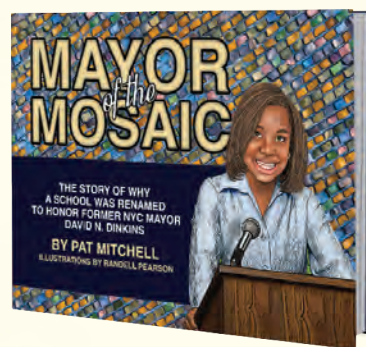


**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Pat Mitchell, Author

Pat Mitchell is a highly successful former New York City Department of Education school principal who renamed her former school to honor David N. Dinkins, New York City's first Black mayor. Pat serves on the board of Literacy in Community (LINC) and is also a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Pat has dedicated her life's work to strengthening communities by bringing families and children together to read, learn, and thrive.

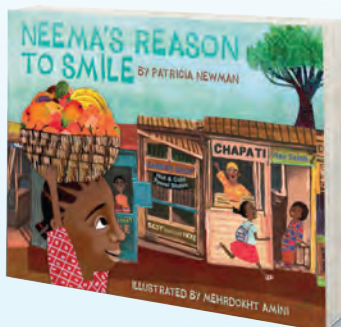
Key Messages:
Self-motivation,
diversity, collaboration,
perseverance, research
skills, and self-confidence



Patti Newman, Author

Patti draws inspiration for her work from real-world problems, big and small. Her book, *Neema's Reason to Smile*, features a young girl in Kenya who developed a plan to pay for her schooling. It is a Parent's Choice Foundation Recommended Picture Book. Patti's presentations empower children to believe in themselves through explorations of topics, including the environment, girl empowerment, global citizenship, and social justice.

Key Messages: Social justice,
understanding differences,
financial literacy,
girl empowerment,
environment, and STEM



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Tanya Montás Paris, Author

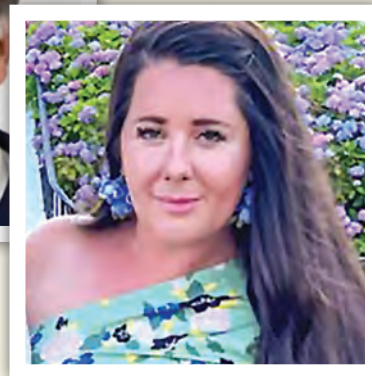
Tanya is a Dominican writer and poet. She has also been a classroom teacher for over two decades. Tanya lives in the Boston area with her husband and their two teenagers. She is the cofounder of Las Margaritas Foundation, a nonprofit organization working to educate underserved children in the Dominican Republic. Tanya's presentations use literature and poetry to inspire students to understand and appreciate people's unique differences.

Key Messages:
Self-acceptance,
girl empowerment,
and appreciating
differences



David and Emberli Pridham, Authors

Emberli Pridham and her husband David are dedicated to inspiring children to imagine and create their own inventions. Inspired by her grandmother and the many books in her home, Emberli fell in love with reading at a young age. David is committed to sharing the important values associated with invention, including creativity, teamwork, and trademark protection. Their school visits motivate children around the nation to embrace the power of STEM education.



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Key Messages:
Entrepreneurship,
STEM, career
readiness, and
teamwork



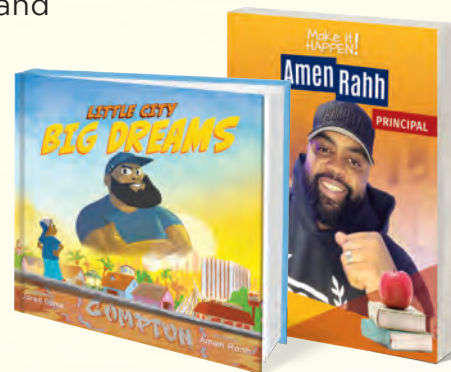


**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Amen Rahh, Activist and Author

Amen Rahh is a nationally recognized educator, writer, and speaker dedicated to advancing social justice, resilience, empathy, and teamwork within the educational landscape. Amen's engaging presentations empower students in diverse urban settings to cultivate self-motivation and set meaningful goals. Amen inspires young minds to embrace their voices and collaborate for positive change, highlighting the importance of empathy and teamwork in achieving social justice.

Key Messages: Social justice, self-expression, empathy, resilience, understanding differences, career readiness, and teamwork



Stephen Ritz, Urban Farmer

Stephen is the founder of the Green Bronx Machine, a K-12 program that inspires students to achieve academic success by growing, eating, and loving their vegetables. As an urban farmer and teacher, Stephen grows healthy students and healthy schools to transform fragmented and marginalized communities into neighborhoods that are inclusive and thriving. Stephen's school visits inspire students to see themselves as capable of making a positive impact in their world.

Key Messages: Health and wellness, community building, urban farming, sustainability, STEM, career readiness, achieving success, entrepreneurship, inclusiveness, and equity



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Tyree Rush, Author

Tyree Rush is a writer, director, and producer hailing from Atlanta, Georgia, with a rich background in producing hit shows like *The Read with Kid Fury* and *Crissle*, *The Nod with Brittany & Eric*, *The Amber Ruffin Show* and *Yo! MTV Raps*. Through his writing and presentations for students, Tyree's presentations include valuable life lessons to encourage personal growth and informed decision-making, helping students realize their potential both in relationships and career development.

Key Messages: History/social science literacy, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and career readiness



Jared Sams, Comic Book Author

Jared is a self-taught artist who creates impactful graphic novels and channels his hip-hop and punk music influences to help children develop unique skills, passions, and creative expressions. Jared advocates for the voiceless through his art and strives to infuse his work with lessons in developing empathy, compassion, and self-expression. His graphic novel *Black and Blue* explores the tension between two brothers as they struggle to find common ground in the face of growing tensions between the police and Black Lives Matter protestors in their community. Jared's presentations empower students to find their voice and express themselves authentically.

Key Messages: Social justice, self-expression, empathy, resilience, understanding differences, and STEM



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

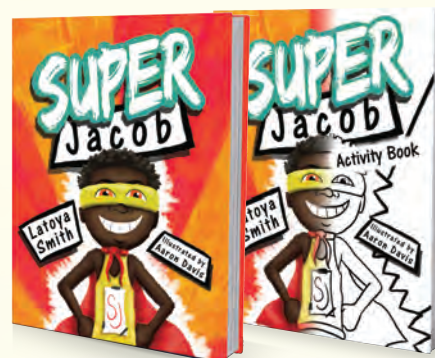


**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Latoya Smith, Author

Latoya Marie Smith M.Ed. is a certified school counselor and the founder of Devoted 2 Restoration, Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides emotional health education to children who have been affected by violence. Latoya has more than ten years of experience assisting children with emotional discovery and coping skills. Her entertaining presentations are designed to educate children on emotional health topics such as self-esteem, anger management, jealousy, and much more.

Key Messages:
Perseverance,
empowerment,
self-regulation,
and mindfulness



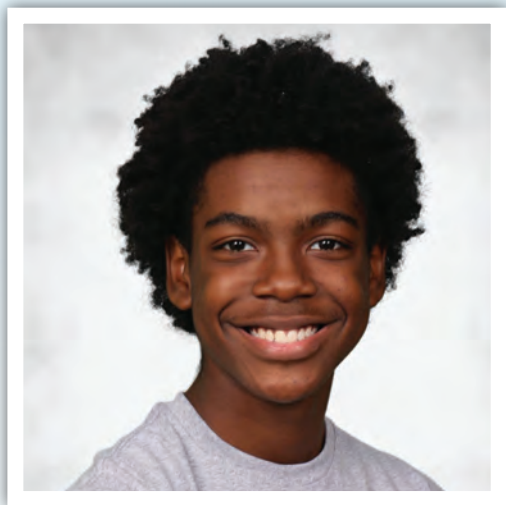
Elaine Sussman, Author

Elaine spent decades as an educational company executive before deciding to fulfill her dream of becoming a children's book author. Her first book, *The Boy Who Opened Our Eyes*, is the poignant story of her blind brother Mark and how he overcame his unique challenges. Her second book, *Joey's Journey*, is the inspiring story of a young boy who overcomes great family hardship to build a life full of courage, resilience, and hope. In addition to writing, Elaine presents to thousands of school children around the country every year, inspiring them to have empathy for others.

Key Messages: Empathy,
resilience, disability
awareness, understanding
differences, and
compassion



Available for Online Visits



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Aiden M. Taylor, Author

Aiden M. Taylor is a sixteen-year-old writer, actor, and model who is passionate about inspiring self-confidence, goal setting, and career readiness in young readers. With a remarkable presence in television commercials and print advertisements, Aiden's face has been seen by millions, including on one of the largest billboards in New York City's Times Square. His debut book, *Me and My Afro*, garnered attention on *ABC Eyewitness News*, *NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt: Kids Edition*, and in *People Magazine*. When he's not writing, Aiden pursues a variety of interests, including basketball, video games, poetry, and math. He is a proud "Little Brother" in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City program. Through his school visits, Aiden actively encourages his peers to respect themselves and prepare for their futures with confidence.

Key Messages: Self-confidence, goal setting, career readiness, mindfulness, and understanding differences



Linda Taylor, Author

Linda taps into her twenty-five years as a school teacher to write books that inspire students to acknowledge their feelings and work together to solve problems. Her two published series, *Amazing Annabelle* and *Daring David*, and her school presentations provide students with valuable life lessons about collaboration and social justice.

Key Messages: Overcoming bullying and discrimination, social justice, compassion, problem-solving, and entrepreneurship



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**





**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Anaya Willabus, Author

Brooklyn-based Anaya was one of the youngest published authors in the nation. She has written three books and wrote her first book at age eight. Through her school visits, Anaya strives to mentor children, inspire them to develop a life plan, and never give up on their dreams.

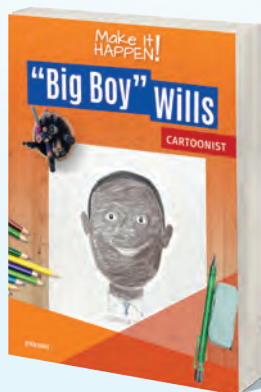
Key Messages: Overcoming bullying and discrimination, financial literacy, finding mentors, perseverance, career readiness, and girl empowerment



"Big Boy" Wills, Activist and Cartoonist

Clarence "Big Boy" Wills is a cartoonist whose work has been displayed in art galleries and at events around the country. Diagnosed with autism as a child and unable to read until he was ten years old, Big Boy has had to overcome many challenges to build a successful career. His compelling presentations inspire students to understand that every person has their own unique measures of success.

Key Messages: Disability awareness, inclusion, kindness, understanding differences, fostering creativity and self-expression, resourcefulness, determination, and career readiness



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**



**Available for In-School
and Online Visits**

Cheryl Wills, News Anchorwoman and Author

Cheryl is an award-winning Spectrum NY1 News TV anchorwoman and popular children's author who is inspired by her family's 150-year-old fight for freedom since the Civil War. Cheryl travels around the world, motivating students to connect with their family roots. Her powerful presentations provide students with the confidence and skills they need to better understand their own family histories and to build productive lives.

Key Messages: Exploring family roots, equity, leadership, initiative, perseverance, girl empowerment, and social justice



Domingo Zapata, Artist and Author

Domingo is a Spanish artist who as a young boy was happiest sneaking into the studio of the famous artist Joan Miró to admire his art. With discipline and commitment, Domingo found a way to turn his childhood passion into a fulfilling career as a world-renowned artist. Today, he presents to students around the world, inspiring them to develop their own unique creative talents.

Key Messages: Overcoming obstacles, STEAM, understanding differences, developing creativity and confidence



Available for Online Visits



ILLUMINATING MINDS TOUR

IN-SCHOOL AND ONLINE AUTHOR AND SPEAKER VISITS AND KEYNOTES



Custom-designed presentations and assemblies to inspire students to see new possibilities for themselves:

- Character Development
- Mental Health
- Bullying Prevention
- Parent and Family Engagement
- Equity and Social Justice
- Health and Wellness
- STEM
- Career Exploration
- Academic Success
- Building Community
- Achieving Goals
- Grit and Resilience
- Disability Awareness



To schedule an **ONLINE** or
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or email info@lightswitchlearning.com

