



September 2026 Friends of the CCBC Newsletter

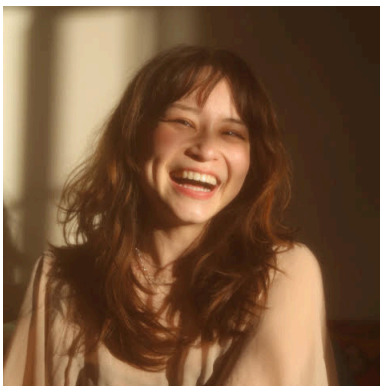
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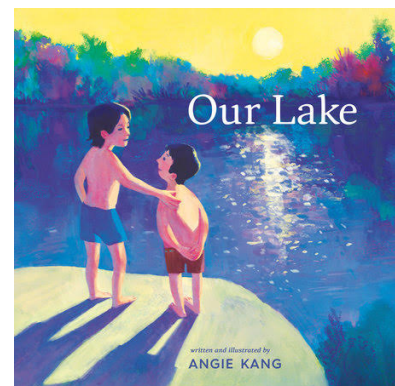
president@ccbcfriends.org membership@ccbcfriends.org communication@ccbcfriends.org friends@g-groups.wisc.edu

In This Newsletter

- A Selection of Remarks from Angie Kang, 2026 Charlotte Zolotow Award Winner
- An Interview with Matthew Cordell, 2026 Charlotte Zolotow Lecturer
- Names and Contacts for your new Friends Board!
- Upcoming Events: Mark Your Calendars!



2026 Charlotte Zolotow Award Remarks from Angie Kang



On Saturday, April 25th, the CCBC hosted the 2026 Charlotte Zolotow Award Celebration, where Angie Kang received the 2026 Zolotow Award for outstanding writing in a picture book for ***Our Lake***, which she also illustrated. Kang delivered lovely remarks on the importance of libraries, art, and family throughout her life, and how those influenced her work in ***Our Lake***.

Of libraries, Kang said, "it was through libraries that I first discovered picture books and other stories. Libraries were my sanctuaries: as a child I spent many hours there, especially during the summers while my parents worked. [...] In middle school I switched schools, and in those early friendless days, I spent all of lunch period in the library. There, I found a librarian, as many of us do, who changed my life. [...] That validation is what propelled me to becoming a proper reader, the first secret threshold that an aspiring writer must cross."

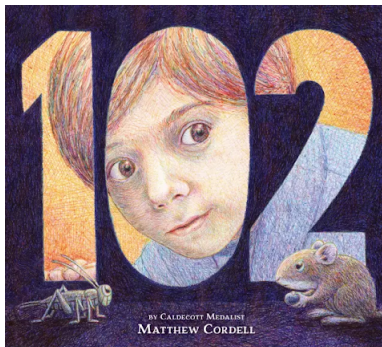


Of art, Kang identifies how Milton Avery's painting *QUARRY BATHERS* was integral to the genesis of ***Our Lake***: "I remember seeing it and feeling certain they were a family. I couldn't verbalize why exactly, but the casualness of their poses and the intimacy of the scene moved me to write a poem then and there. Out came six simple stanzas that detailed two brothers trekking up to bathe in a quarry. One brother hesitates, the other beckons him in, and that was that."

(*QUARRY BATHERS* inserted to the left, for ease of reference, [found here](#))

Of family, Kang describes how growing up Chinese guided her when deciding not to give the brothers names in ***Our Lake***; "[...] the younger brother refers to his older brother simply by what he is to him. Brother. In Chinese, you always refer to your relatives by their relationship to you instead of by their name. It can feel formal in an English-speaking context, but it feels natural, intimate, and tender in Chinese. Calling your older sibling by their name would be quite jolting and rude. It was a subconscious decision I defended strongly—and only later understood when I reflected on my father and the bonds that tie our family together."

Finally, on ***Our Lake***, Kang says, "many people are often surprised and relieved to hear that this story is not biographical in nearly any way. I was born far from water. I have no siblings. My father is still alive. I have not yet experienced that particular grief. But while ***Our Lake*** is about grief, it is also about community. As an only child, I was shaped by my isolation. I tend to talk about being an only child a lot—a very only child thing to do—but having lived a rather solitary childhood, I sought to expand my sense of family through community, be that with my friends, neighbors, or mentors. Though I don't have a literal brother who could care for me in the wake of a great loss—I have this community who has taught me the same grammar of love I was able to write into this book. Painful experiences can make us turn away from the world, from new experiences, and even from ourselves. For the brothers in ***Our Lake***, they have each other to pull them back toward life and show each other how memory can be healing even if the remembering can hurt. I have learned that love for others and their love for me can bring us back to ourselves and the world, and keep us open to the future."



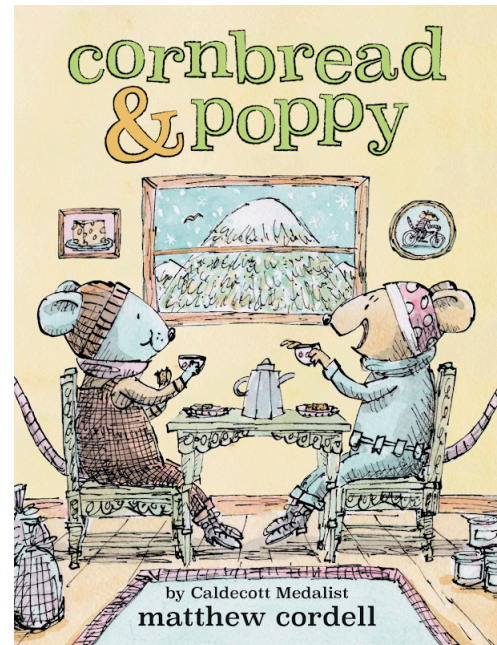
**Interview with
2026 Charlotte
Zolotow
Lecturer
Matthew
Cordell**



The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), being a library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, administers the Charlotte Zolotow lecture, which each year brings a distinguished children's book author or illustrator to the campus to deliver a free public lecture.

This year's lecture will be delivered by **Matthew Cordell**. Matthew Cordell is the Caldecott Medal-winning author and illustrator of ***Wolf in the Snow***. He has also written and illustrated ***Starman: The Cosmic Voyage of David Bowie***, ***102, Evergreen***, and the ***Cornbread and Poppy*** series. His highly acclaimed children's books have been translated into many languages for readers around the world.

Friends Communications Coordinator Nelly Green had the pleasure of conducting an interview with Cordell, exclusive for the Friends of the CCBC. Please Enjoy!

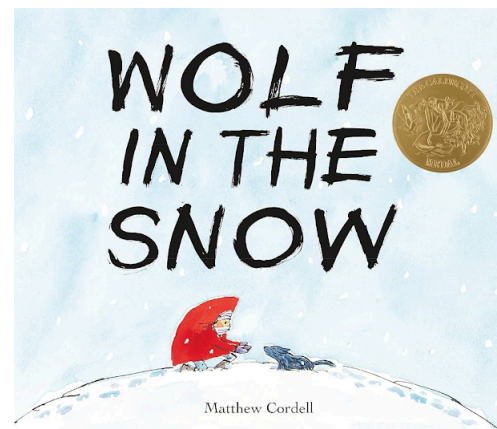


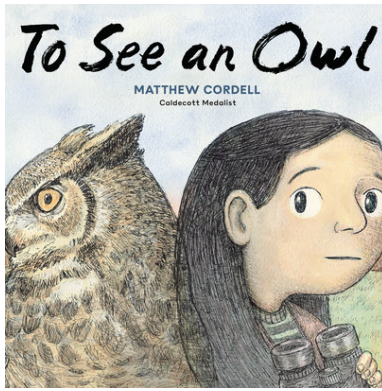
Do you have a personal philosophy when it comes to creating stories for young readers? If so, does that philosophy change at all when you're writing and illustrating a project versus illustrating a manuscript from another author?

When writing, I think about reading it to a room full of elementary school students. How will they react to what I'm saying? Am I writing over their heads? Am I writing too silly things that I will be embarrassed to read? Is it going to hold their attention? Also, I think about what I've written before and I sometimes want to do something completely different for my next book. I like to create surprises for my readers, multiple times in one book, whether it be in the writing, or the pictures alone, if I'm illustrating someone else's manuscript.

A bookish take on the classic chicken-or-egg question! When working on a project you're writing and illustrating, which comes first: the art or the words?

Almost always, I am writing first. I always find the story is the bones of the book and the pictures are built on top of those bones. So that order just feels more natural. I have occasionally drawn a picture for fun in my sketchbook that I am then inspired to find a story within. My book ***Wolf in the Snow*** was created this way!



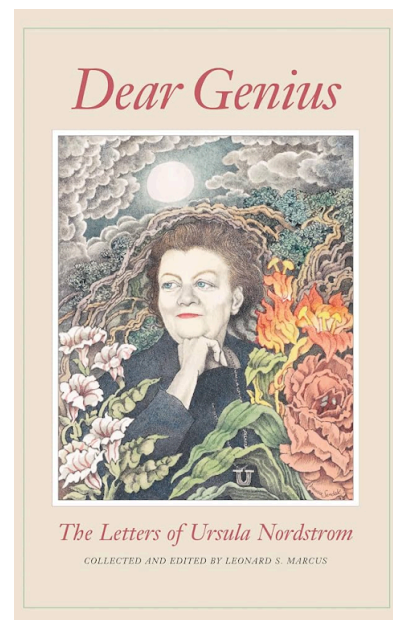


In To See an Owl, Janie has an affirming and encouraging supporter in her teacher, Mr. Koji. Is he inspired by someone you had growing up, whether that be for fostering your own interest in owls, or perhaps in fostering your interest in art and writing?

Mr. Koji is definitely an amalgam of the many wonderful teachers I had growing up. The driving force in my life has been drawing and visual art, so I owe so much to the teachers who so often shined a light on my talents as a shy kid growing up, and encouraged me to take art more and more seriously. Mr. Koji's name is a tribute to family member Koji Yaguchi (who was a high school physics teacher), who is, like me, very curious about the natural world. Koji gifted me my first proper camera when he saw how seriously I was diving into birding, in my early years of obsessing about birds.

Is there a book/reading experience that helped guide your path into working in children's literature?

When I began to [it] take seriously, the craft of making books for young readers, I happened upon ***Dear Genius: The Letters of Ursula Nordstrom***. Ursula Nordstrom was a beloved and groundbreaking editor who many see responsible for the modern era of children's books (when we all stepped out of the world of, say, Dick and Jane books). It blew my mind to see the inner-workings and correspondence between Ms. Nordstrom and the many talented creators she worked with and nurtured, including Maurice Sendak, Margaret Wise Brown, John Steptoe, and of course, the wonderful Charlotte Zolotow.



Which of your books is your children's favorite?

Each of my two kids has a book I created that is very centric to them personally, and these are the ones that seem to be most special to them (and to me, as well). For my oldest, Romy, I based the main character in ***King Alice*** on him personally, and he even helped me write some of the passages in the story (it's about a Dad and his child who make a book together, so the book within the book is very child-like in its creation). My youngest, Dean, was the model for the main character in my latest book, ***102***. I worked with him for hours and hours taking pictures of him in different poses that would eventually end up in the pages of the book.

Do you have a pie-in-the-sky project that you'd love to publish one day?

Absolutely. My longtime daydream is to write and illustrate a much longer text than I've ever written—a middle grade novel. I have an idea that I'm excited about, I just need to get the nerve (and more importantly the time) to sit down and bring it to fruition!

Have you ever put ketchup on a Chicago-style hot dog?

I grew up in the state of South Carolina, so I wasn't aware of the hardcore fanaticism surround the Chicago-style dog until I moved up here in my 20's. As a kid I liked both ketchup and mustard on my hot dogs, but I have seen the light, and it's ketchup never more!

The 2026 Charlotte Zolotow Lecture will be held on Thursday, October 15, 2026, at 7:30 p.m. (CST), in Room 350 in the Teacher Education Building on the UW-Madison campus. We anticipate that the lecture will be recorded and livestreamed.

The CCBC is committed to creating an inclusive environment. If you need a reasonable accommodation, contact ccbcinfo@education.wisc.edu or (608) 263-3720 by October 1, 2026. We will attempt to implement late requests but cannot guarantee they will be met.

[A Room of One's Own Bookstore](#) will sell the selections of the author's books before and after the lecture.

The Friends of the CCBC will host a small reception directly before the lecture in the CCBC's Elizabeth Burr Conference Room from 6-7pm.

[Registration](#) is required to facilitate in-person and virtual accommodations. No printed tickets will be issued. The event is free and open to the public.

Your New Friends Board Members!

Here are the following slate of officers for the 2026-2027 year:

- Maria Parrott-Ryan, President
 - president@ccbcfriends.org
- Molly Jensen, Vice President/President Elect
 - vicepresident@ccbcfriends.org
- Carlie Wiseley, Treasurer
 - treasurer@ccbcfriends.org
- Megan Schliesman, Membership Secretary
 - membership@ccbcfriends.org
- Ellen Bunn, Recording Secretary
 - secretary@ccbcfriends.org
- Katie Noguchi, Director-at-Large
 - atlarge2director@ccbcfriends.org
- Lisa Hempstead, Director-at-Large
 - eventsdirector@ccbcfriends.org
- Nelly Green, Communications Coordinator
 - communication@ccbcfriends.org

You may also contact us through the [contact form](#) on our [website](#).

Upcoming Fall Events

Mark your calendars for some great events coming up this fall!



2026 Charlotte Zolotow Lecture: Matthew Cordell

October 15th, 2026

7:30 PM

MERIT Room 350

Teacher Education Building

225 N. Mills St., Madison, WI

[REGISTER HERE](#)

2026 Book Sale

Sat, December 4th

4 - 7 PM

Sun, December 5th

8 - 11 AM (Bag Sale for final 30 Min)

Cooperative Children's Book Center

Teacher Education Building

225 N. Mills St., Madison, WI

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)



Friends of the CCBC

-Supporting the work of the Cooperative Children's Book Center-