

THE AUTHORS SHOW – Authors of Children's books

Author: Julie D Penshorn

“The Barnyard Buddies STOP for Peace”

Wrapped in a hand-crocheted, Swedish-colored blue and yellow afghan, my six-year-old-self learned to love reading. Snuggled with foster-sister Brenda, and listening with rapt attention, I discovered the power of words. I was educated and moved as her voice immersed me in the story. I'll never forget the Ernest Thompson Seton classic about Wahb, the grizzly bear. It shaped my love of animals and nature, and my commitment to a sustainable planet. It also taught me to love stories.

As Brenda read, our special relationship deepened. Eight years my senior, her news reporting was (twice) nominated for a Pulitzer. I knew that though I shared her passion for the written word, and her love of the turn of a phrase, I would probably never write as well.

Yet, I followed a long tradition of people who tested the limits on their lives. Certainly, my Swedish immigrant ancestors, who dared to leave their homes to come to America, weren't afraid of a challenge.

I have met academic challenges by getting my Master's degree, and riding goals by succeeding at the highest level. Now, I unabashedly tackle another: writing well, like Brenda, while writing to move people and support peace. “And it isn't enough to believe in [peace]. One must work at it,” said Eleanor Roosevelt. Her thoughts spur me to channel all my gifts, skills, and energies to enhance our time here on the planet -- one child, one story, and one song at a time.

I originally came to this work because I found myself floundering as I tried to parent my young child. With the help of Rebecca Janke, a peace educator who ran the preschool my son attended, I studied, learned, and practiced. Together we formed the nonprofit, Growing Communities for Peace, and worked side-by-side for 10 years.

However, the nonprofit's income was tenuous, and I had a child to support, so I turned to full time work in the horse business. Back at it now, I have hit the ground running with the

nonprofit and its new project: Smart Tools for Life, where the focus is providing engaging and entertaining children's books and music on the broad topic of peace.

My first children's book, "The Barnyard Buddies STOP for Peace," came about because I watched the animals at my barn enact this scene and I thought, "That's what people do!" This small excerpt gives a taste, but, sitting down with a child, perhaps snuggled in a blanket, to read the entire book, pour over the creative details in the engaging art, ask a question from the parent and teacher guide, and even try out the song that is notated at the end, is a far better way to enjoy it!

"The Barnyard Buddies STOP for Peace"

The barnyard was peaceful. All were sunbathing.

Then the rain came, and all, but King, were complaining.

"I can't fit under where the roof goes over,"

Said the shivering goat, whose name was Clover.

So they huddled together and stomped to keep warm,

And the rain pelted down. It was quite a storm.

The droplets smacked hard on their hair and their hides.

And it hurt! And they grumbled, and their anger did rise.

"I'm mad at King who stole the best spot,"

Said Grey Donkey to Clover, Portland Pig and Ol' Dot.

And the others agreed, and their anger grew hot!

Yes, King was under the barn roof, and they, were not.

The story shows the animals dealing with anger at King, and working out their conflict. It holds important tools that empower children to first stop and breathe before acting, and then problem solve. The skills can be useful for creating the type of environment at home and at school that is welcoming and caring, so children feel they can safely learn.

Animals and people can be quite reactive and unimaginative in their interactions when led by simple instinct. Luckily, humans can learn to think before acting through this type of social and emotional skill building. With repetition and practice, as part of a child's early learning experience, these skills become as normal as brushing one's teeth.

"Teach the children so that it will not be necessary to teach the adults," said Abraham Lincoln over 150 years ago. He knew that young children are like sponges, absorbing the world around them. So, if Dad hits Mom as his way of resolving conflict, the small child draws this into him or herself.

I have learned, grown, and succeeded because of my family; structure, love, safety, foster children, responsibility, dinner at six, and enough to eat, shaped me and immeasurably empowered me. After travelling widely and living in 10 different states, I've seen many ways that I've benefitted from my white face and my background. I have often thought, "What about those who are differently endowed?"

I recognize how many people don't have some or all of the things I have been blessed with, not to mention enough food to eat, or even water to drink. I see the trauma and misery of children, the hateful rhetoric of politics, racism, and homophobia, and I think, "I'm darn well going to give what I can." As Hank Williams Jr. Sings, "It's a family tradition!"

Kids are suffering worldwide for many reasons. Some suffer because adults don't have the skills to solve their problems peacefully. My hope is that the kids' books and music at <https://www.SmartToolsForLife.com> can afford children the power to take us into our shared future with compassion, not fear, and with forgiveness, not war. If they embrace the smart tools, perhaps they will be more capable of providing peaceful, safe homes for the next generation.

I am trying to be someone of value on this planet. I don't want to wonder at the end of my life what I have done for others. I want to know I did my best.

In summary, children don't care how much you know, but they sure know how much you care. I will continue to write and tell the stories that both adults and children can use to develop the skills for a culture of peace. But, without your sharing, they will be invisible. Please take action by voting for this book. It's a vote for me. Thank you! It's also a vote for us all and our shared future!

Other books by Peshorn:

"Peacemaker's A,B,Cs for Young Children," by Rebecca Janke and Julie Peshorn Peterson,1995

"The Compassionate Rebel: Energized by Anger, Motivated by Love," by Burt Berlowe, Rebecca Janke, and Julie Peshorn, 2002