



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**January 25, 2024**

Contact: [carrlee.craig@sleepingbearpress.com](mailto:carrlee.craig@sleepingbearpress.com) | 734.619.6226 ext. 1014

## **Cherry Lake Publishing Group Announces 2023 Own Voices, Own Stories Award Winners**

Ann Arbor, Mich.: Cherry Lake Publishing Group is thrilled to announce the 2023 recipients of its annual Own Voices, Own Stories Award. Launched by Cherry Lake Publishing Group's imprint, Sleeping Bear Press, the Award recognizes new authors from historically marginalized groups with the intention of recognizing and amplifying new and diverse voices with underrepresented perspectives. With this Award, Cherry Lake Publishing Group aims to highlight the universal experience of our shared humanity through diverse and multifaceted experiences. For the 2023 award season and in partnership with Easterseals, the Own Voices, Own Stories award was eligible to new authors with disabilities.

Grand Prize winners receive a \$2,000 cash prize and a publishing contract standard for new Sleeping Bear Press authors. Honor Award winners receive a \$500 cash prize as well as one consulting session with a Sleeping Bear Press editor. Submissions selected for the Sleeping Bear Press Own Voices, Own Stories collection will be offered a publishing contract.

2023 Award winning manuscripts will be published as part of Sleeping Bear Press' 2025 season.

### **2023 Grand Prize Winners TODAY MY BRAIN IS A DINOSAUR by Kyla and Jedidiah Mora**

**Kyla Mora** is a nationally certified high school teacher with a decade of experience teaching literature, English, and journalism. She is also a published journalist whose reporting carried her from local papers in Texas to the USA Today network outlet in Guam. As a neurodivergent kid, she learned how to harness the ways her brain worked differently from others both through her own experience and from her mother, a career special education teacher. As an educator she found her niche working with gifted students, channeling her neurodivergent strengths into crafting fun, inspiring, and challenging learning communities. She is a lifelong bookworm who loves fiction and film, acts in local theater productions, and can't stop rescuing abandoned animals. She lives in the Houston area with her husband Jedidiah.

“From everyone I’ve told about this story, I heard the same response: ‘I wish I’d had a book like this when I was a kid (or when my kid was a kid)! It would have helped so much.’ I think that’s why I wanted to write it: to help people who don’t understand what it’s like to be neurodivergent to get a glimpse of how strange and chaotic and wonderful it can truly be, and to let neurodivergent readers see their inner worlds come to life on the page. If even one kid meets Caleb and understands themselves a little bit better, learns to love themselves a little bit more, then this book will have done everything I wanted it to do.”

**Jedidiah Mora** never thought he’d write a book. Born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, he has worked in the water industry his entire career, drilling wells and operating pumping stations. As an adult, finally

being diagnosed with ADHD put a lot of things in perspective and helped him recognize how best to channel his neurodivergent strengths. He is happiest when, armed with tools, he is figuring out how to make things work. He enjoys mechanical engineering, off-roading, overlanding, and audiobooks. And tools. Especially tools. He currently lives in the Houston area, where he and his wife Kyla spend their spare time volunteering and chasing their four rambunctious rescue animals.

“This story is important to me because there are a lot of kids who are misunderstood and are perceived as troublemakers or ‘bad kids,’ but things just need to be explained a little bit differently to them. A different communication style works for them. They need patience. And I hope it helps kids like the one in this story to see someone like them learning to deal with those challenges.”

**2023 OVOS Collection Selection**  
**Dreams Take Flight**  
**By Brittany Richman**

**Brittany Richman**’s three energetic kids are her proudest accomplishment. She and her husband are raising them (and their rambunctious goldendoodle Rocky) in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Brittany is cofounder of The American Moms blog and a former White House staffer. She holds an MFA in Writing for Children.

Brittany has been partially deaf since childhood. So when she first noticed a photo of deaf pilot Nellie Zabel Willhite hanging in her local airport, she was intrigued. She soon learned Nellie deserved more than just a photo. She hopes Nellie’s story will inspire children everywhere to see their own potential for greatness and soar to heights they never thought possible.

The Own Voices Own Stories Award is sponsored by Cherry Lake Publishing Group. To learn more, visit <https://cherrylakepublishing.com/ovos>. To arrange for an interview or feature regarding this award, email [carrlee.craig@sleepingbearpress.com](mailto:carrlee.craig@sleepingbearpress.com).

**Own Voices, Own Stories Collection**

*A-Train Allen* by Lesley Younge, Grand Prize Winner, Published Spring 2023

*Happy With My Nappy* by Gina Lewis, Published Spring 2023

*Who Am I* by Julie Buchholtz, Grand Prize Winner, Published Fall 2023

*La Mariachi* by Isabel Estrada, Published Fall 2023

*Dancing The Tinikling* by Bobbie Peyton, Published Fall 2023

*A Little Bit of Everything* by Meghana Narayan, Publishing Spring 2024

*A Kurta to Remember* by Gauri Dalvi Pandya, Grand Prize Winner, Publishing Spring 2024

*Wild Greens Beautiful Girl* by Erica Lee Schlaikjer, Publishing Fall 2024

*Yasi and Mina’s Pomegranate Tree* by Nikoo Yahyazadeh, Publishing Spring 2025

*This Sunday My Daddy Came to Church* by Jeanine DeHoney, Publishing Fall 2025

###