

2011 SHABO AWARD WINNERS

The Loft received 54 entries to the 2011 Shabo Award for Children's Picture Book Writers. From these, mentor Laura Purdie Salas had the difficult task of choosing seven writers for the award. The contest is open to writers with a "nearly there" picture book manuscript who have not yet published a book. Writers participate in a day-long master class and receive individual manuscript consultation with the mentor.

The writers selected for this year's award are **Terri DeGezelle** of Mankato, **Katy M. Jensen** and **Kristin Johnson** of Saint Paul, **Jennifer Kirkeby** of Brooklyn Park, **Cindy Christian Rogers** of Maple Grove, **Rachel Smoka Richardson** of Columbia Heights, and **Jennifer Zolot** of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Honorable mentions went to Pat Miller of Fitchburg, Wisconsin, and Patricia Schaffer of Minneapolis.

The Shabo Award was established in 2005 by Loft student Bridget Levin to celebrate the publication of her first book for children and to express her gratitude to the Loft for its role in the book's development. "I think it's so important to give back," says Bridget Levin. The name of the award was inspired by her childhood imaginary playmate, Shabo. I was the fifth of eight children, and I needed a creative ally to navigate the currents of a big Irish Catholic family." As she grew in her writing life, Shabo became a conduit for childhood memories: a muse. And now, Levin hopes, Shabo will serve as an inspiring symbol for other children's writers.

The Winners

Terri DeGezelle continually strives to blend her two arts forms, writing and photography. She has had nonfiction pieces for children as well as her photographs appear in numerous magazines. Terri is a presenter at Young Writers' and Young Artists' Conferences around the Upper Midwest. She enjoys doing school visits and inspiring students to follow their dreams while explaining a day in the life of an artist. In Terri's perfect world, she is reading, writing, spending time with her adult children, playing with her grandchildren, and photographing the world around her.

Katy M. Jensen is a business development analyst for Lockheed Martin Exploration and Science Solutions. She won the 2009-2010 Loft Mentor Series in Poetry and Creative Prose. Her work has been published in *A View from the Loft* and *Antarctica: Life on the Ice*. Katy has served as a judge for the Minnesota Book Awards, and she mentors elementary-school students for In2Books, a national literacy program.

Kristin Johnson teaches writing and lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Johnson has won several writing awards including the Loose-Leaf Poetry Award and the Mystery Writers of America Helen McCloy Award. In the last year, she completed three historical nonfiction books for young adults: *The Endurance Expedition*, *The Orphan Trains*, and *Ho Chi Minh, a biography*. She is currently working on a novel.

Jennifer Kirkeby is a published playwright, actress and teaching artist. She has written sixteen plays which have been produced. Her adaptation of Ludwig Bemelmans' *Madeline's Christmas*

(Dramatic Publishing Company) has been performed in over forty theatres nationwide. She is a mother, wife, and the failed dog trainer of her two Schnoodles. Visit her blog at: <http://jenniferkirkeby.blogspot.com/>

Cindy Christian Rogers is an award-winning magazine writer, editor, and launch consultant who writes fiction for adults and children. She is a previous recipient of a 2007 Shabo Award and has been a fiction finalist for the Loft Mentor Series. Cindy lives on Fish Lake in Maple Grove but spends as much time as possible on or near Lake Superior, sailing, camping, and climbing trees.

Rachel Smoka-Richardson is working on her MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults at the Vermont College of Fine Arts. Her critical thesis, "Developing Character Through Revision: Examining the Evolution of *Because of Winn-Dixie*," won both the July 2011 VCFA Critical Thesis Award and the 2011 Kerlan Essay Award. She completed the Loft Master Track program (now Foreword) in children's and young adult literature, and earned her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Liberal Studies degrees from the University of Minnesota. Rachel serves as the Director of Institutional Giving at the Children's Theatre Company, and lives with her husband in Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

Jennifer Zolot holds a B.A. in English from Bates College, an MAT in language arts instruction from Tufts University, and an MFA in writing for children and young adults from Simmons College. She teaches literature and writing to middle school students in Boston, and lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with her husband Ken. Her interests in dance and Asian cultures inspired her current picture book project.

The Mentor

Laura Purdie Salas started out writing for adults, but teaching 8th-grade English renewed her love for kids' books. Over the past 11 years, she has written more than 80 poetry, nonfiction, and fiction books. Picture books are her favorite form, and poetry is her first love. *Stampede! Poems to Celebrate the Wild Side of School* (Clarion, 2009) was a finalist for the Minnesota Book Award and an Honor Book for the 2010 Paterson Prize for Books for Young People. Laura enjoys working with writers (both adults and kids) and presents at writing conferences, through online courses, at the Loft, and at area elementary schools and young author conferences. Visit her web site at www.laurasalas.com.