



Laurie Keller is the winner of the 2017 (Theodor Seuss) Geisel Award for *We Are Growing!: A Mo Willems' Elephant & Piggie Like Reading! Book* (Hyperion Books for Children/Disney Book Group). Her acceptance remarks were delivered at the ALSC Book and Media Awards Program on Monday, June 26, 2017, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

For more information about the Geisel Award, visit <http://bit.ly/geisel-award>.



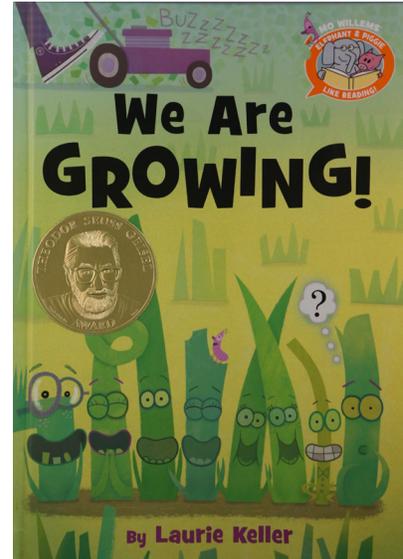
Geisel

AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Thank you for being here, everyone! Thank you, ALA, ALSC, Shilo Halfen, and the members of the 2017 Theodor Seuss Geisel Award committee for this prestigious award—one that I never imagined receiving, but one that means more to me than I could ever express. On another note, please know that I'm doing my part to abide by your recent amendment to the *Geisel Award Recipient Handbook*—the one that makes it mandatory for recipients to celebrate with cake and champagne every day for one year until the next winners are announced. Greg Pizzoli, Mike Twohy, David Milgrim, Kara LaReau, and Matt Myers, congratulations on your honors and wonderful books, and I trust you're doing everything in your power to uphold this new rule as well.

I'm incredibly honored to have received an award named after one of my childhood heroes, Dr. Seuss. Like most kids, I loved Dr. Seuss books and they were always in heavy rotation among the many books my mom and I read together. I loved his crazy characters, silly wordplay, and zany worlds he created, all of which helped to make learning to read such an exciting adventure.

I loved drawing and writing as a kid but never dreamt I could one day do those things for a job because I didn't realize authors and illustrators were just regular people like me. It still



hits me every so often that there are companies out there who want me to think up stories and draw pictures to put in books; and that there are real, live human beings, big and small, who pick them off the shelves—on purpose—and actually enjoy reading them! It truly blows me away.

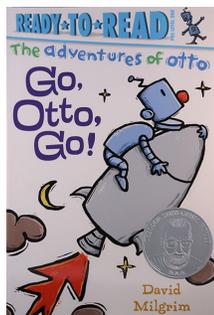
Making *We Are Growing!* was a growing experience for me, too. I was so excited when my agent, Steve Malk, called to tell me that I'd been invited by Hyperion editor Tracey Keevan and that Mo Willems guy, to submit ideas for his new *Elephant and Piggie Like Reading!* series. It was my first easy reader and though it wasn't easy for me to make, I enjoyed writing all 973 versions and learned wheelbarrows full along the way. I'm so grateful for

Laurie Keller grew up in Muskegon, Michigan, and always loved to draw, paint, and write stories. She earned a B.F.A. at Kendall College of Art and Design, then worked at Hallmark as a greeting card illustrator for over seven years. Keller is the author-illustrator of numerous books, including *Do Unto Otters*, *Arnie*, *the Doughnut*, and *The Scrambled States of America*, among others. She lives in Michigan in a cottage in the woods on the shore of Lake Michigan.

2017 GEISEL HONOR BOOKS

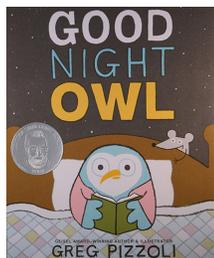
Go, Otto, Go!

Milgrim, David
Illus. by the author
Simon Spotlight/
Simon & Schuster



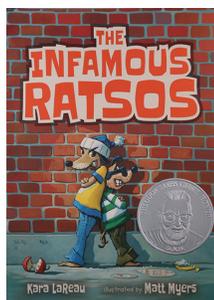
Good Night Owl

Pizzoli, Greg
Illus. by the author
Disney-Hyperion/
Disney Book Group

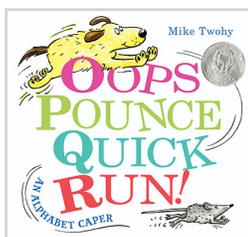


The Infamous Ratsos

LaReau, Kara
Illus. by Matt Myers
Candlewick



*Oops, Pounce,
Quick, Run!*
An Alphabet Caper
Twohy, Mike
Illus. by the author
Balzer + Bray/
HarperCollins



Geisel

AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

having had the opportunity to work with Tracey and Mo, and I couldn't have made this book without them.

I have a few thank yous to make:

Thank you, Mom, for all our time reading and making art together, for your never-ending support of all my artistic endeavors, and for a reassuring "you'll figure it out" whenever I need it.

Thank you, Scott, for being a great brainstormer, for pampering me with your delicious cooking, and for answering the phone on the evening of January 22 when I ignored it, thinking it was a telemarketer. That would have been one heck of a phone call to miss!

Thank you to my creative friends (too many to mention by name) for all your help in coaxing stubborn stories out of my head.

Thank you, Steve Malk—you are the Malk-i-est, and I'm happy to be a part of your team.

Thank you, Tracey Keevan, for envisioning possibilities from a scribbly sketch and for your humor, patience, and guidance in showing me the ins and outs of "easy reader" books.

Thank you, Mo Willems, for sharing your razor sharp wit, for the inspiring, loveable book characters you've created, and for rocking that groovy, floral corduroy jacket I love so much.

Thank you, teachers and librarians, for all the endless caring things you do to help kids become lifelong lovers of reading, for making them feel excited to come to the library, and for letting them know that their favorite authors and illustrators are just regular people like them.

And finally, thank you again, Geisel committee, for this amazing honor. I am indeed the THANKFUL-EST!

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Association for Library Service to Children

For more information about the Geisel Award, visit <http://bit.ly/geisel-award>.