

“Each recipient will provide NLLN with written reports on their activities and how these activities have benefited the profession as a whole and/or the library community at large.”

Professional Engagement Funds
Report from Gail Nordstrom
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While the nuts and bolts of the work of the 2011 Caldecott Committee drew to a close upon the selection and announcement of the award and honor books in January, the committee met once again at the American Library Association Annual Meeting in June to honor the recipients.

Fourteen of the fifteen committee members were able to attend the conference to take part in Caldecott-related events. In private gatherings with the honorees, I gained insight in the inspiration behind the books, the collaboration among creators and publishers, and the production of the artwork.

On Friday, the publisher hosted a private gathering with Erin Stead and Philip Stead, the illustrator/author team that created the 2011 Caldecott Award winning book *A Sick Day for Amos McGee*. Erin is very shy, Philip a bit less so, and the intimate setting allowed them both to be more comfortable speaking about their joint effort that brought the book to life.

Bryan Collier, illustrator of Caldecott Honor Book *Dave the Potter: Artist, Poet, Slave* met with the committee on Saturday. Unfortunately, author Laban Carrick Hill was delayed in his travels and unable to join us. I had a lengthy conversation with the art director and editor of the book who described their active involvement in the production of the book. Fortunately, I was able to speak with Hill the following evening at a reception prior to the Newbery Caldecott banquet when he described the trials of writing Dave’s story for a young audience. On Tuesday morning, I attended the Coretta Scott King Award breakfast where Collier gave a moving speech about the book – and tribute to the man – *Dave the Potter*.

Finally, the committee met with David Ezra Stein on Sunday. He described the process of creating *Interrupting Chicken*, a deceptively simple book, from drawing on purple paper to set an evening tone; to making stencils of, coloring, and then putting together the various parts of Papa and little chicken; to cutting out a window and placing an illustration behind it for one of the fairy tale segments.

The culminating event was the Newbery Caldecott Banquet. This year, both the Caldecott and Newbery awards were given to the “first books” of each recipient. Neither was a seasoned speaker, but both delivered exceptional speeches. Timid Erin rarely raised her eyes to the crowd, who was won over by her articulate and heartfelt address. Newbery award winner Clare Vanderpool kept

the audience chuckling as she described her journey to published writer. The evening concluded with a speech by beloved Tomie dePaola, winner of the Laura Ingalls Wilder award for “substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children,” offered biennially by the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC).

The text of the Caldecott, Newbery, Wilder, and Coretta Scott King Award speeches appear in the July/August paper edition of The Horn Book Magazine, given to attendees of the Coretta Scott King Award. It is an outstanding issue that includes articles from two 2011 Caldecott Committee members.

When studying, discussing, and selecting the award and honor books, the 2011 Caldecott Committee had only the information provided in the book itself (if included), their knowledge of art materials and techniques, and possibly information gleaned in an article about or interview with the illustrator. From the private gatherings with the illustrators and creative staff of the publishers, I now better understand “our” Caldecott books which I will share with children and educators for years to come. Indeed, I will examine all picture books with an even more refined eye than I did six months ago. I’ve learned that studying the art in picture books is a skill that continues to grow long after committee work ends. I appreciate that fifteen committee members with wildly different backgrounds and perspectives on picture books grew to respect one another – and continue stay in contact with and draw inspiration from one another.

I had time to attend only a few conference programs, although I wish I had had time for many others: the Public Library Association’s refocused and restructured “Every Child Ready to Read” program; “MBA for Librarians: Statistics”; Notable Books for Children Committee discussion, and the ALSC President’s Program on library service to children with autism.

Once again, I appreciate the availability of Professional Engagement funds to contribute to the cost of attending the conference. I am grateful to be a recipient of the funds and look forward to bringing the knowledge and skills of evaluating picture books to the NLLN region.