

Library Lines by Ruth Gilbert, Youth Services Librarian

It's September and another summer is slipping away. Many of us have taken advantage of the warm weather to spend time with friends outdoors. Here at the Kirkland Town Library our front lawn has been worn away by the footsteps of patrons who attended our outdoor storytimes, movie screenings, games of bingo, concerts, and other activities under our tent. The loss of grass is a worthwhile cost of providing a safe place for our community to gather. As fall approaches and many of us find ourselves returning to the old routines of school and work, I hope we're able to savor the connections that we made under the tent and seek out new ones wherever we find ourselves. If your family needs some inspiration, here are some new children's books about friendship and connection.

"A Friend Like You," by Frank Murphy and Charnaie Gordon, and illustrated by Kayla Harren. This brand-new picture book shows a diverse group of kids doing things that good friends do, like being open-minded, accepting, kind, and forgiving. This book could be especially helpful to any children hoping to make some new friends as school begins.

"First Day Critter Jitters," by Jory John and illustrated by Liz Climo, is another great book for children starting school. The adorable critters are shown answering questions about why they're feeling anxious about starting school. A sloth is worried about moving too slowly; a snake is stressed because it keeps slithering out of its backpack. But once they're all gathered in their classroom together, the animals realize that they're all nervous and they figure out how to help each other.

"Trouble," by Katherine Battersby tells the tale of a squirrel who has a bear for a new neighbor. Squirrel has some preconceived notions about bears and assumes that he will be a nasty, and possibly dangerous, new neighbor. Squirrel's pet mouse Chamomile seems to think that Bear is only trying to be friendly, but Squirrel sees everything Bear does as trouble. Can Squirrel move past his assumptions and find a new friend in Bear?

"Aven Green: Baking Machine" by Dusti Bowling is a chapter book that also addresses how to deal with assumptions. Aven loves to bake, and she and her friends are excited to try to win a blue ribbon for baking at the county fair. But before they can win, they have to agree on what to bake! Each friend wants to make their own favorite treat, but Aven assumes they're gross or weird because she's never heard of them before. Aven will have to give some new things a try to have a chance at winning.

"Skunk and Badger" by Amy Timberlake and illustrated by Jon Klassen, is another story about overcoming differences to find friendship. Badger is perfectly happy living by himself in his aunt's brownstone, but one day Skunk shows up at the front door and says he's Badger's new roommate. At first Badger is confused, annoyed, and also secretly intrigued by Skunk, but slowly they get to know each other and become unlikely friends.

"Starfish" by Lisa Fipps. This novel in verse for middle grade students shows how true friendship can change someone's life. Ellie has dealt with fat shaming her entire life, and not just from bullies at school. Her mom constantly comments on her weight but doesn't understand the damage it does. When a new girl named Catalina moves in next door, Ellie understands what it's like to be totally accepted for who she is. Catalina and her family never talk about weight or judge her for how she looks, and their support helps Ellie when she decides to talk to a therapist about how to accept herself as she is.