

VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

A LETTER FROM GORDON KORMAN



Photo credit: O. Kassimir

Every time I walk into a Scholastic Book Fair, my whole life flashes before my eyes. Well, three-quarters of it, anyway. I wrote my first book for a seventh grade English assignment, and when I thought about trying to get it published, the first name that popped into my head was Scholastic. (I was class monitor for Scholastic Book Orders, so I figured I was practically an employee!) And less than two years later, when I was fourteen, Scholastic published my debut novel.

It's been more than forty years since then, but not that much has changed. Wherever my books collide with readers, the name Scholastic is rarely far away. More kids find my novels at Book Fairs than anywhere else. And my long Scholastic history — now in its fifth decade — continues. I visit Fairs as an author, volunteer at my own kids' Fairs, and once even wore the Clifford suit at my daughter's

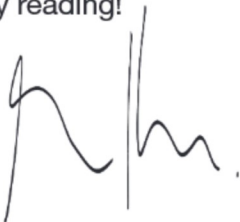
preschool. (It was a memorable, Purple-Heart-worthy performance, during which I very nearly took a nose-dive down the back stairs.)

There's nothing quite like the expressions on the faces of a class of kids as they march into the Book Fair. The pointing fingers; the exclamations of "Hey, they've got — !" and "Check it out, it's — !" And they're talking about books, not video games or action figures or DVDs. That's pure gold.

Today's students can be overstressed, overscheduled, and tested until they reach for HB pencils in their sleep — but not at the Book Fair. This is a place where story is supreme, a celebration of reading, writing, and creativity. Here, the only limits are the limits of kids' imaginations.

To you, the volunteers who make the Book Fair possible, I say "Bravo" — and mostly, "Thank you!" You are the delivery system that puts books in young readers' hands. I hope you know that I'm with you — in the pages of my novels, and also in spirit, cheering you on as you do this wonderful job. And, yes, in the same spirit, I'm still wearing the Clifford suit.

Happy reading!



Gordon Korman