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FUZZWIPPERS PLAY FAIR



MARILYNN HALAS
Illustrated by Jeremy Provost

Finding Fuzzwippers

by Lynn Kreps

Photos provided by Goodman Media International, Inc.

Marilynn Halas' 6-year-old daughter came home one day with slumped shoulders and a dejected expression. "What's wrong?" asked Marilynn. "Nothing," was her reply.

Wanting to comfort her sad child, but knowing that pushing her to talk before she was ready would be like taking a cake out of the oven too early, she came up with something else. Rum-maging through her coat pocket, she found a pom-pom that had fallen off a hapless glove.

"Quick! Get in the car, honey! There is someone we have to go meet!" she said excitedly. Marilynn ushered her daughter into the vehicle and they drove off down the road a little way.

"Who is it?" asked her daughter with wide eyes.

"It's someone who's come a long way to meet you," Marilynn replied.

Pulling the pom-pom from her pocket, she presented it to her daughter, saying, "This is a Fuzzwipper. It has come all the way from the land of the Fuzzwippers to find a special friend. Fuzzwippers only choose one child to love and care for it and this one has chosen you."

Her daughter's eyes grew wider. "Is it a boy or a girl?" she said.

"You'll have to ask," replied Marilynn. "Fuzzwippers only talk to the child they have chosen. This Fuzzwipper would like to live and share with you."

Marilynn solemnly placed the Fuzzwipper on her daughter's palm. And just like that, Fuzzwippers were born!

"I come from an Irish background," laughed Marilynn Halas during a recent



Author Marilynn Halas



Illustrator Jeremy Provost

interview. "We are storytellers."

Halas has four children and is an attorney, life coach and founder of 4Sunflowers Media. 4Sunflowers Media has released three *Fuzzwippers* books, to be joined by a fourth and fifth by Summer 2013.

"Before I formed 4Sunflowers Media, we had a family meeting around the dinner table. I explained I would like to share Fuzzwippers with the world. My kids were very happy and excited and proud of it," she laughed. "Now, when things go well, we have sparkling cider together!"

The *Fuzzwippers* books each highlight a story kids will find entertaining and a life skill to help them feel comfortable in their own skin. In *Fuzzwippers Play Fair*, young George and his Fuzzwipper interact with other children at the park and have to figure out what to do when everyone wants to use the slide at the same time. The story uses clear language and vibrant illustrations to reinforce positive values along with the overall message: "You are loved, no matter what." Halas feels very strongly about this message.

"In my experience, kids don't hear that enough," she said. As an attorney and mediator, she is particularly sensitive to the emotional damage inflicted when

families argue. "It's vital that issues get resolved before serious scars are left on people that will be in each other's lives the rest of their lives," she added. "I've dealt with many adults trying so hard, but what kids need to hear is that they are enough and loved no matter what."

Each *Fuzzwipper* story includes tips for kids and a Parent's Pointer at the end of the book. Said Halas, "This is great for a fresh idea or new perspective. It makes a great starting point for discussion."

Reading with your child is also a wonderful way to stay connected with him or her in the moment. So many messages for kids are about waiting or in the future. We tell them, "When you're older, you'll understand" or "Not now, sweetheart." As parents, we are always anticipating the next milestone, but it's important to acknowledge the immediate as well. Halas agrees, "THIS moment has value. I tell my kids, 'You have exactly one year to be [this old]. In this moment you have everything you need to rise to the challenge of what's set in front of you.'"

With Fuzzwippers, children are empowered as well as entertained. They make a child feel wanted and needed, and allow them to use their imaginations to help navigate through childhood. Since Fuzzwippers are specific to each child, it can be anything the child needs in that moment.

"Adults can learn a lot from listening to a child telling you a story," Halas said. "My stories are like a zucchini brownie: sweet and good with a little nutrition as well."

For more information or to purchase the *Fuzzwippers* series, please visit www.4sunflowersmedia.com or Amazon.com.

Life is short – parent well! **PBG**