

# David Schmidt: A Force to Reckon With

By: Deb Sadowski

It's not often that Wautoma is chosen for the beginning of a book tour, but for author and illustrator David Schmidt, it was a no-brainer. On Oct. 12, he kicked off his book tour at Parkside Elementary School. Schmidt is a 1984 Wautoma High School graduate.

"I lived on a farm on Highway 21 and went to Riverside Elementary School, then Wautoma High School, where I graduated in 1984," Schmidt said.

"I did a lot of drawing and writing. I would write little stories that I often would put down in journals. Making up these stories fueled my creativity."

Schmidt makes his home now in Denver, CO, but came back to his roots by visiting Wautoma and holding a creative writing workshop at Parkside Elementary School.

"It is rewarding to have the skill to be

T=Talking; these are the leads that help you form your paragraphs.

After the workshop, the students were treated to a talk about Schmidt's new series of chapter books that showcases animal heroes and environmental responsibility. These books are geared towards kids age 8-11.

His "Natural Forces" series is a delightful, exciting, environmentally themed action adventure series that follows the exploits of five orphaned animal youngsters chosen to be protectors of the Earth. Each of the books takes place in a national park or historical place.

Each wild creature, badger, bear, wolf, ferret and falcon has special powers that allow them to turn into a warrior who fights evil. These warriors endure the survival of the environment and the planet. Each book deals with a diverse range of issues,

Amazon.com: "The vile Nathan Axxes unleashes a plot to toxify the world's oxygen supply from the secret lair hidden inside the Grand Canyon and puts his evil scientist, Dr. Kaustik, in charge. The earth is in serious trouble indeed when Kaustik brings an army of Soldier-jacks and his lethal mechanical S.P.I.D.E.R. along to ensure their wicked plans materialize."

Another example is from his book, "Jinx of the Black Lynx:" "The world's most lethal hunter, Colonel Shaka, is called in to hunt down and eradicate a newly discovered species of wild cat

when its very existence threatens to uncover a secretly buried arsenal of nuclear weapons in northern Minnesota. Can the Natural Forces team save the last feline of its kind and survive themselves once Shaka and his brutal



(Above) Author Dave Schmidt talks with one of the teachers that influenced his life, kindergarten teacher Kathy Lotspeich.



(Above) Briana Blader gets her poster signed by the author David Schmidt.



Parkside Students Dylan Huges, Ty Guden, Madison Weisensel and Tenaya Sharp volunteer to tell a spur-of-the-moment story to start a "spark" of creativity.

able to write the books and illustrate them as well," Schmidt said.

"It's great to take a book from start to finish. The book series started as a way to combine my love of nature and concern for the environment with the skills I have as a writer and artist."

Schmidt took the time to talk to the fourth and fifth grade students and selected a group of five and had them choose a sentence from a basket and make a story from that sentence. The students' creativity ended up with some lively stories that had the whole group entertained.

He taught the students several methods to help get those first few paragraphs down. Here are some examples of his advice: You don't have to have a blowout with the first sentence. Many of the most famous stories in history start out with a simple sentence. Don't worry too much about what you are writing; just write and the creativity will come. Also, try: Q=Question, E=Exciting, S=Snapshot and

such as teamwork, individuality, greed, abuse of power and coming to terms with their roles as Mother Nature's guardians.

"Being from Wisconsin, of course, the main character had to be a badger," Schmidt said. The excitement about the books was palpable as the students asked Schmidt for details of each book.

Here is a short synopsis of the book "Air in Judgment," which is available on

henchman target them as well?"

Earlier in the day, Schmidt had a pleasant surprise when his elementary art teacher, Paul Miller, stopped by. Then, while answering questions during his last session, Schmidt noticed that one of the teachers had her hand raised. It was then that he realized that she was his kindergarten teacher, Kathy Lotspeich. He had been in one of first classes she had taught.

"The teachers I had here in Wautoma helped begin my quest to become a writer and illustrator, and I hope that maybe one day, one of the kids that I talked to may remember my class today," Schmidt said. "Perhaps that spark of creativity will bring them the joy of writing that I so enjoy."



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Author David Schmidt works with St. Bronislava students.

# Students learn from children's author

FOR THE STEVENS POINT JOURNAL

Fourth- and fifth-grade students of St. Bronislava School recently were given the unique opportunity to learn more about the process of writing from published author-illustrator David Schmidt. The students participated in an interactive writing lesson that concluded with a question-and-answer session during which the students learned more about what it is like to be

a children's author.

Schmidt is a Wisconsin native whose children's books, "Natural Forces," combine the elements of super heroes, courageous animal characters and environmental themes in a thrilling action-adventure series that upper elementary students find highly entertaining. Through these books, Schmidt was able to captivate the St. Bron's students and make the writing process both enter-

taining and educational.

"I like his books and how he taught us how to put sentences together," said Salena Sankey, a fifth-grader.

"He is a really good picture drawer!" said Calvin Hackbarth, fifth-grader.

"It was a good idea to make all of his books about nature," said Eden Schmidt, fourth-grader.

Contributed by Lynette Gray,  
St. Bronislava School secretary.