

Authors for Earth Day

by Debbie Dadey

Are you a teacher or librarian interested in taking care of our planet? Then, I want to introduce you to Authors for Earth Day. In 2008, children's author Brooke Bessesen combined her love for the earth and school author visits to create the very first Authors for Earth Day. Since that time more than thirty conservation organizations have been helped with over \$44,000 in donations. Authors agree to donate all or part of their Earth Day visit honorarium to a conservation organization and schools participate by funding the author visit and voting on the organization to receive the donation. Brooke has it very organized and schools simply follow the steps she has outlined at authorsforearthday.org. An amazing slew of authors participate in the annual event.

I first became involved in 2010 when I visited a school in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. I was thrilled when they chose to donate to the Humane Society. I later visited Amity Elementary Center in conjunction with the release of my *Mermaid Tales* book, **Dream of the Blue Turtle**. Usually schools vote on the day of the author visit, but I asked AEC if they could vote in advance. I was delighted when they chose the Whale and Dolphin Conservatory (www.whale.org) after researching the various organizations. The conservatory is a perfect choice for a school because I was able to make a donation toward adopting three different animals, one for each of the sessions I did with the delightful kids at AEC.

For the Kindergarten and First graders, I adopted a dolphin named Mischief in their name. The second and third graders were thrilled to be the adopted sponsors of a whale named Coral, who lost his mother to fishing gear entanglement. The fourth and fifth graders became the proud 'parents' of an orca named Holly. Through the organization the students received adoption certificates, monthly

updates, stickers, and Whale and Dolphin magazines so that my Authors for Earth Day visit wasn't just a one-time thing, but an on-going learning experience.

As for my author visit? I shared with students some of the research for my book, **Dream of the Blue Turtle**. I held up a cloth shopping bag after showing a picture of a 2000 pound leatherback turtle. "Something in this bag can kill a leatherback. What do you think it is?" Guesses ranged from a shark to a sword! But they were all surprised when I pulled out a type of plastic grocery bag that leatherbacks often mistake for jellyfish (their favorite food). If a leatherback eats enough plastic bags, they will die. That's why I encouraged students to try to either reuse their plastic bags, recycle them, or use cloth bags. I hope between adopting ocean animals and learning about leatherbacks, students at Amity Elementary Center took home something from their Authors for Earth Day visit that they'll remember forever.

And if you're a teacher or librarian who would like to combine your love of books with caring for our planet, I hope you'll check out www.authorsforearthday.org/ and consider being a part of the fun next April. Earth Day 2016 is April 22nd, but the Authors for Earth Day program isn't limited to just that day.

Debbie Dadey is the author and co-author of 162 books for children, including *The Adventures of the Bailey School Kids* and *Mermaid Tales* series. Her newest book, **The Crook and The Crown** (Aladdin) snares a mystery, orcas, and mermaid royalty in one chapter book. **Twist and Shout** continues this multi-cultural science slanted series in May (Mermaid Tales #14). She now lives in Tennessee, but visits schools all over the world.