

Q&A: Author Stephen Nawotniak Shares the Goals of New Children's Book, *Mubu the Morph*

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Pictured L-R: Jeffrey Scott Perdziak, illustrator and Stephen Nawotniak, author, hang out with their pal, Mubu!

As the new school season is upon us, we often think about what new skills children gain. Sharing valuable life lessons with children can be challenging and fun. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, teacher or someone who works with kids, it is important to share lessons in and out of the classroom. The Museum of disABILITY History

recently partnered with author Stephen Nawotniak and illustrator Jeffrey Scott Perdziak, both of Clarence, NY, to bring a new children's book series to life.

The first book, *Mubu the Morph*, is suitable for children grades K to 3, and offers lessons on self-image, self-confidence and character development. In a candid interview, author Stephen Nawotniak shares the goals of the book series.

What inspired you to write this book/series?

I believe that we pass on wisdom gained through experience through stories, and the stories that we tell our children can affect the perspective they develop. *Mubu the Morph* began as "sketching with sound"...putting together interesting sounding phrases to a cadence. Over time, this phonetic sketch morphed into the story before you today.

What are your goals with the book?

My primary goal for the book is to provide a medium to share that

a positive self-image is developed from our internal gifts and talents versus an external comparison with others.

Why is it important for this book to be part of children's and schools reading lists?

I think certain messages are timeless and have an importance and value that extends beyond all cultures, socioeconomic situations, ages and creeds. They are messages that ring true to the human soul. Positive self-image and self-identity are such messages.

In addition to a positive self-identity, understanding and acceptance of differences are important qualities. In the story, Mubu realizes that while he, himself, does not fit in with a specific group, he can share his purpose with those groups should he choose. This "sharing" brings with it challenges as well as joys...and Mubu gets to choose what to focus on. The power of choice is another such message.

What common themes are there in the Mubu book series?

The Mubu series will contain themes of positive self-identity, the value of overcoming obstacles, gifts that come from challenges and that wisdom can often come from mistakes or injuries. It is a series that honors the human spirit and shares how that spirit can grow and develop into a positive one through challenges and apparent setbacks.

What qualifies you to know what families and/or educators may look for in children's book topics?

Mubu the Morph is about developing a positive self-identity from internal gifts and purpose versus comparison with external situations. Living with a disability (bipolar) has made that distinction very apparent as I work on my own identity amidst the community and self-stigmas that exist around people with a mental health condition. While I believe that this challenge has improved significance in my



Held on August 8, our Mubu the Morph Book Launch Kick-Off event was a bit hit! Children had fun during book readings with author and illustrator Stephen Nawotniak and Jeffrey Scott Perdziak, along with being creative with chalk drawings and getting their caricatures made.



Our Mubu the Morph book kick-off launch event was a fun day for families. Claudia Lee and her children, Christian and Alexandra, enjoyed reading the book together.

life because of my situation, I believe it is a challenge that faces all in some way and that all can benefit from its story/wisdom.

What is your long-term vision for the book series?


My long-term vision of this series is to provide a series of characters and situations that can provide a positive message relatable by everyone. Each story is unique and is written over the course of its own timeline, but all attempts to provide the reader and listener both a journey that feeds the soul. I would love to provide readings to kids involved with summer camps/programs, offer author visits to schools, support literary centers with tools to improve reading and complement the stories with lesson plans to support teachers in integrating the messages into their classrooms in a relevant way.

What other topics do you plan to explore in the Mubu book series?

Mubu's Christmas addresses the value of imagination. *Blue Mubu* addresses the ability to shift one's perspective from sad to glad (gratitude, not necessarily happy). *Kookoo-ah-choo's Flight* addresses the process of recovery from an emotional injury and how that process can strengthen us. *Dr. Snoo* addresses how the process of an injury or challenge can provide us with the ability to be a better support/help towards others...and can actually end up being a gift in unknown ways.



In August, Linda Pellegrino, WKBW-TV Channel 7 AM Buffalo host, interviewed Stephen Nawotniak, Mubu the Morph author and Doug Farley, Museum of disABILITY History director.



The *Mubu the Morph* children's book is available for \$9.95, at the Museum of disABILITY History's store and online, store.museumofdisability.org and mubuthemorph.com.