

# Teaming Up with National Storytellers League

## Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers Comes Alive

Interview with Carol Satz, President, National Storytellers League

### WHAT BROUGHT THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY FOUNDATION (ALPLF) AND THE NATIONAL STORYTELLERS LEAGUE (NSL) TOGETHER?

President Abraham Lincoln was a natural-born storyteller. He knew the *power* of storytelling in communication! To honor President Lincoln, the NSL, a nonprofit, volunteer storytelling organization founded in 1903, is participating in the ALPLF's *Adopt-A-Whisker Campaign*. Local story leagues will feature the children's picture book *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers* by Karen Winnick, crafting the written word into the spoken word. Winnick's historical research and illustrations inspire storytellers to "tell" this true story of 11-year-old Grace Bedell and her letter asking presidential candidate Lincoln to grow whiskers.

Ann Zigrand, retired librarian and storyteller in the Garden State Storytellers League (GSSL), local league of the NSL, knows *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers* will be the perfect story for NSL's youth storytelling program because Winnick presents Lincoln as a family man influenced by a child. Supported by her husband, Ed, a Lincoln and Civil War buff, Ann developed strategies to "tell" this book. Grace Bedell comes to life through Isabella Guhl-Erdie, a twelve-year-old Junior Storyteller in the GSSL, who "tells" the story in first person. Eleven-year-old Justin Venezia, accompanies Isabella on the guitar and sings *Lincoln and Liberty* and *Dixie*. Performances in New Jersey included: "New Jersey Storytelling Festival" (Hamilton/Trenton) and "President Lincoln, Storyteller" (at the National Historic Site commemorating Lincoln's ancestry, in Imlaystown, New Jersey, in February 2012).

### HOW DID ISABELLA AND JUSTIN BECOME INTERESTED IN THE ART OF STORYTELLING?

Isabella's father, a storyteller in the GSSL, is her role model. As a blacksmith and storyteller at the Howell Living History Farm (New Jersey), he brings history to life. Her storytelling goes hand-in-hand with her many talents: writing, playing piano and guitar, acting, singing, and dancing in her school's drama club. She says storytelling enriches her academic studies and speaking skills. She highlights the encouragement of her mother and influence of Gwendolyn Jones, GSSL founder and Professor Emerita, The College of New Jersey.

Justin's music "tells" a story. Heavy Metal music is his passion, but integrating storytelling and the music of Lincoln's time period has expanded his horizons. He is an all-around young man who enjoys playing football, swimming, and diving. His grandparents, members of the GSSL, are role models. He is encouraged by his parents, structural and chemical engineers, to develop his creativity and imagination through music and storytelling.

### WHERE CAN ALPLF MEMBERS SEE THE NSL BRING THE BOOK ENTITLED *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers* TO LIFE?

*Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers* will be featured at the National Storytellers League Convention, Las Cruces, New Mexico, July 2012. Throughout the 2011-2012 year, NSL leagues, in addition to the GSSL, will feature the book at storytelling events at schools, libraries, bookstores, community festivals, museums, churches, senior living facilities, and Girl and Boy Scouts programs. Events include:

- **Altoona Story League, Pennsylvania:** Day of the Arts Celebration, Juniata Gap Elementary School
- **Fireside Story League, Washington:** Storyteller Dave Rasmussen as Abraham Lincoln and Karol Brown as Harriet Tubman (Brownstone Productions) will present an original program.
- **Las Cruces Story League, New Mexico:** Founder's Day Annual Event; Boys and Girls Club program
- **Prairie State Story League, Illinois:** Girl Scouts from Algoma, Wisconsin, led by Illinois storyteller Diane Zastrow, will celebrate Lincoln's Birthday in costume.
- **Carol Stream Public Library, Illinois:** Lincoln's whiskers puppet and craft program with Lincoln penny guessing contest.

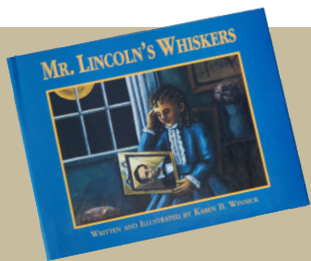
For more information on the National Storytellers League, visit their website at [www.nslstorytellers.org](http://www.nslstorytellers.org). Visit [AdoptAWhisker.org](http://AdoptAWhisker.org) to learn more about supporting this campaign.



Isabella Guhl-Erdie with the Certificate of Whisker Adoption and Karen Winnick's *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers* presented to the National Storytellers League



Justin Venezia



### To learn more about the Adopt-A-Whisker Campaign®

and how you can support the Foundation by adopting a Lincoln whisker, visit

[AdoptAWhisker.org](http://AdoptAWhisker.org).