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**OMG BOOKFEST HEADS TO CHICAGO TO ENGAGE READERS
AND BRING BOOKS & AUTHORS
TO UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES**

The 3-day festivities to include:

An Educator Night, School Visits, An Author Circus & More!

NEW YORK, NY (March 2020)—For the past three springs, OMG! (Oh, Middle Grade!) BookFest, a celebration of books that brings popular and award-winning authors together with kids ages 6 to 14, has been popping up in cities across the Midwest, leaving in its wake thousands of engaged readers. This year, the festival is visiting Chicago!

From April 23rd-25th, 2020, 23 authors will descend on the Windy City for #OMGCHI, an inclusive and exciting interactive experience of games, activities, and reading. This year OMG is thrilled to partner with Anderson’s Bookshops of Naperville and HarperCollins’ Shelf Stuff to help get its message and books to children across the region.

“We cannot express enough what a wonderful opportunity our community will have in hosting the OMG BookFest this year,” said Becky Anderson, owner of Anderson’s Bookshops. “The author line-up is stellar. Our community of students are in for a day they will always remember; one that will guarantee them becoming lifelong readers. OMG is that rare opportunity for kids, families, and educators to meet awesome authors and engage with them about the joys and power of books!”

Since it first launched in 2017 with a one-day event in Columbus, OH, OMG has grown into a three-day, wide-ranging festival that includes an educator night, a full-day of “Your Story Matters” activities with students in underserved schools, and “The Author Circus,” an afternoon reading extravaganza open to all families. In its first three years, more than 5,000 students have celebrated a love of reading and story with a diverse crew of authors, and OMG has distributed approximately 3,000 new books to students in Title 1 schools.

This year, the festival kicks off with an educator and librarian evening to allow the authors to meet with the people who are so essential in the mission of connecting children with books.

The next day, on April 24th, 21 authors will come together and visit with more than 1,000 students from the area at Gombert Elementary in Aurora, IL to celebrate “Your Story Matters”. Kids will experience a variety of breakout sessions, each with a unique theme, from magical creatures to superheroes, and each led by a set of authors. In addition, every child who attends will go home with an autographed book in the hope that this experience will foster a love of reading for years to come.

“When kids meet an author in person, it can have a long-lasting impact on them,” said author and OMG Board member Christina Soontornvat. “Our authors want students to know that their own stories are just as important as any story they read in a book. We want to empower them to make their voices heard.”

#OMGCHI will culminate on April 25th with “The Author Circus,” a public event at Fischer Middle School, 1305 Long Gove Drive, Aurora, IL from 1-4 pm, in partnership with Anderson’s Bookshops. Readers will experience themed activities and a book signing with 23 OMG authors, including local authors Kat Leyh, Liesl Shurtliff, Jasmine Warga and Tom Watson.

Participating authors in OMG Chicago include:

- Alex Aster, debut author (*Curse of the Night Witch*)
- Max Brallier, NYT bestselling author (*The Last Kids on Earth* series)
- Michael Buckley, NYT bestselling author (*Finn and the Intergalactic Lunch Box*, *The Sisters Grimm* and *Nerds* series)
- Soman Chainani, NYT bestselling author (*School for Good and Evil* series)
- Ally Condi, NYT bestselling author (*The Darkdeep* series)
- Brendan Reichs, NYT bestselling author (*The Darkdeep* series)
- Julia DeVillers, NYT bestselling author (*Ultra Squad* series)
- Stuart Gibbs, NYT bestselling author (*Spy School* series)
- Karina Glaser, NYT bestselling author (*The Vanderbeekers* series)
- Alan Gratz, NYT bestselling author (*Allies* and *Refugee*)
- Vashti Harrison, NYT bestselling author & illustrator (*Little Leaders* series)
- Hena Khan, award-winning author (*More to the Story*, *Amina’s Voice* and the *Zayed Salaam* series)
- Kat Leyh, Chicago-based author/illustrator (*Snapdragon*)
- Sarah Mlynowski, NYT bestselling author (*Whatever After* & *Upside-Down Magic* series)
- Rex Ogle, award-winning author (*Free Lunch*)
- Celia Perez, award-winning author (*Strange Birds*)
- Debbie Rigaud, NYT bestselling author (*Hope* series)
- Liesl Shurtliff, NYT bestselling author (*Rump*)
- Ronald L. Smith, Coretta Scott King Award winner (*The Owls Have Come to Take Us Away*, *Black Panther: The Young Prince*)
- Christina Soontornvat, STEM educator and author (*A Wish in the Dark*, *The Changelings*)
- Jasmine Warga, Newbery Honor medalist (*Other Words for Home*)

- Tom Watson, Chicago-based author/illustrator (*Trouble at Table #5*)
- Alicia Williams, Newbery Honor medalist (*Genesis Begins Again*)

#OMGCHI is able to carry out its mission in the region and connect with so many children, families, and educators, thanks to the generous support of Bloomsbury Children's Books, Candlewick Press, HarperCollins' Shelf Stuff, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Justice, Macmillan Children's Books, OwlCrate Junior, Penguin Books for Young Readers, Random House Children's Books, Scholastic Press, Simon & Schuster, Sourcebooks, and Anderson's Bookshops. Special thanks to Angie Gaul and Laura Evans from Anderson's Bookshops, Christina Ensign from Gombert Elementary, and Jessica Walsh and Lynne White from Indian Prairie School District for being our boots on the ground.

For more information on OMG BookFest's mission, visit: <https://omgbookfest.org>