

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Publicity Team**

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**Celebrate an Unsung Hero of the Civil Rights Movement with *Opening Closed***

***Doors: The Story of Josie C. Murray***

written by Linda Sittig with Linda Jackson King

illustrated by Whitney Truitt

on sale May 9, 2023

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“Written with the eye of a historian and the heart of a teacher...a must-read in the classroom, [and] a reminder that access to books can change history and lives.”

- Dr. Karen Huff, director of Shenandoah University Children's Literature Conferences

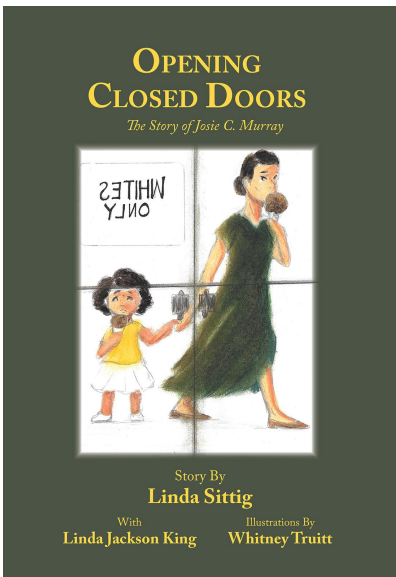
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[Brandylane Publishers, Inc.](#) of Richmond, Virginia, is excited to announce the upcoming release of a new children's book, [Opening Closed Doors: The Story of Josie C. Murray](#), written by Linda Sittig with Linda Jackson King and illustrated by Whitney Truitt.

As a Black child in 1930s Virginia, Josie Cook spent her youth in a world full of closed doors. The ice-cream parlor, sit-down restaurants, even the local schoolhouse—under Jim Crow, all were off-limits to Black citizens.

As an adult, Josie—now Josie Cook Murray—made an admirable living with her own sewing business, in spite of the many doors that had been shut in her face. But when yet another closed door prevented her from continuing her work, she proclaimed that enough was enough. She would not back down—and her determination to enact change in her community set off an inspiring journey that would lead her across the color line and through all sorts of doors in all sorts of buildings—even the White House.

Told in part by Josie's own niece and honoring the courage and persistence of those who confronted the injustices of segregation and paved the way for those who would follow them through the many doors to come, *Opening Closed Doors: The Story of Josie C. Murray* is scheduled for release on May 9, 2023.



*Not long ago, public libraries in Virginia were not so public. It would take the courage of a young African-American woman, Josie C. Murray, to challenge that.*

*From a young age, Josie felt the supreme injustice of the Jim Crow South—ordering ice cream inside a restaurant and continuing her education beyond the seventh grade were opportunities denied to Josie during her childhood. Josie was surrounded by closed doors, barred from opportunities available to white people. But in 1957, when she was denied the ability to check out a book from the Purcellville Library because of the color of her skin, Josie took action. With the help of her husband Sam Murray, a lawyer, and even President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Josie built a case and became the catalyst for all public buildings in Virginia to desegregate.*

### **About the Authors**

[Linda Sittig](#) was born in New York City, raised in northern New Jersey, and put down her adult roots in Virginia. A bachelor's in history and a master's in education led to a teaching career with Fairfax County Schools and the opportunity to be an adjunct professor at Shenandoah University. During her time teaching in Fairfax, the Greater Washington Reading Council selected Linda as the Outstanding Teacher of the Year. The following year, the Virginia State Reading Association honored her. A decade later, the International Reading Association awarded her the Outstanding International Elementary Reading Teacher of the Year medal.

Based on the belief that family literacy leads to lifelong readers, Linda wrote a fifteen-year weekly newspaper column, "Kinderbooks," reviewing the best in children's literature. The column ran in multiple newspapers in Washington, DC. Combining her passion for history and strong women, Linda created a blog, [www.strongwomeninhistory.com](http://www.strongwomeninhistory.com), where she highlights the stories of women who should have become famous.

Linda's sincere belief that every woman deserves to have her story told shows through her historical novels: *Cut from Strong Cloth*, *Last Curtain Call*, and *Counting Crows*.

[Linda Jackson King](#) is the niece of Josie Murray, and collaborated with Linda Sittig on *Opening Closed Doors*.

### **About the Illustrator**

[Whitney Truitt](#) is a freelance children's book illustrator. She graduated from Christopher Newport University where she earned a bachelor of arts degree. With the use of chalk pastels, her artwork mainly consists of portraits and landscapes created in traditional art style. Her first self-published children's book, *Wisdom of Xingfu*, contains a collection of positive affirmations from fortune cookies. The book pulls from Chinese culture and promotes self-love and motivation.

### **Interviews available upon request.**

[Brandylane Publishers, Inc.](#) is an independent press located in Richmond, Virginia, that has published books since 1985.

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*Opening Closed Doors: The Story of Josie C. Murray* (hardcover, 34 pages, \$25.95 / paperback, 34 pages, \$14.95) is available for pre-order from [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), and other fine booksellers. Kindle e-book (retail \$2.99) forthcoming.