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New Children's Picture Book *You're Not Invited!* Invites Readers on *An Ooey-Gooeys Adventure* Celebrating Teamwork and Inclusion

written by Sylvia Rouss & David Titcher

illustrated by Rick Penn-Kraus

on sale January 21, 2025

"... a heartwarming story that explores the theme of social exclusion and the true value of acceptance, kindness, and helping others . . . The illustrations capture young readers' imaginations and bring the story to life with vibrant colors and inspired scenes, evoking all sorts of emotions. A beautiful and wonderful book!"

- Katherine Choe, principal, Mar Vista Elementary School for Advanced Studies, Los Angeles

[Brandylane Publishers, Inc.](#) of Richmond, Virginia, is excited to announce the release of a new children's picture book, [You're Not Invited!: An Ooey-Gooeys Adventure](#), written by Sylvia Rouss and David Titcher and illustrated by Rick Penn-Kraus.

At a moment when US and global politics demonstrate our increasing division, a new children's picture book is sending a powerful message about reaching out to those who are often excluded—and recognizing their special talents. *You're Not Invited!: An Ooey-Gooeys Adventure* celebrates diversity and acceptance, teaching young readers to reach across the aisle—or the yard!—to discover and appreciate the talents of those members of our community some might carelessly deem “undesirable.” Willy Worm, Speedy Centipede, and Shelly Snail are a trio of creepy-crawly “Ooey-Gooeys” even other bugs think of as slimy and strange—so much so that the most popular bug around, a prideful bee called Queen Bea, forbids them from attending her backyard blowout. But when the Ooey-Gooeys demonstrate their bravery, creativity, and cleverness after said party is crashed by something bigger than all the bugs in the backyard, Queen Bea and her followers find themselves eating their words—and embracing their new friends' big, ooey-gooey hugs!

“The story of hurt feelings, friendship, responsibility, and forgiveness comes to life in a fast-moving tale that is visually engaging and color bursting on every page,” wrote Lisa Hochberg-Miller, a rabbi with Temple Beth Torah in Ventura, California. “Willy Worm, Speedy Centipede, and Shelly Snail are a wonderful trio who model for young readers creative problem-solving and initiative.” Rosemary Kiladitis, mother, children's librarian, obsessive knitter, and cofounder of “On Wednesdays We Wear Capes,” called the work “an upbeat story of friendship and acceptance; of a bully who realizes her mistake, and a maligned group that's courageous and generous enough to forgive,” while resolution expert Keith Shulner made note of the book's

message of cooperation and its warning against judging a book by its cover: “People can benefit from being more inclusive and not excluding others simply because they are different. As a resolution expert, I have seen conflicts that could have been avoided or reduced if the people involved would have learned the lessons this book teaches.”

Written by a pair of prolific authors and furnished with imaginative, colorful illustrations in a unique style full of depth and fun textures bring a tactile sense of joy and uniqueness to the visual storytelling, much like the Ooey-Gooeys themselves. Offering an engaging way to discuss the value of inclusion, kindness, and the importance of recognizing the strengths in others, no matter how different they may appear, *You're Not Invited!: An Ooey-Gooeys Adventure* released January 21, 2025.

A New Children's Picture Book Celebrates ... the Power of Being Different"

Everyone Has a Special Talent, No Matter How Different They May Seem

You're Not Invited!: An Ooey-Gooeys Adventure is a story about the importance of collaboration, recognizing untapped abilities, and showing kindness to those who may not fit in with the mainstream crowd. The book emphasizes that everyone, no matter their appearance or background, has something valuable to offer — and sometimes, those who are excluded are the ones who can make the biggest difference.

As we continue to have important conversations about how to include and uplift marginalized voices, this story reminds us that real heroes can come from unexpected places. The Ooey-Gooeys are initially seen as 'undesirables,' but by the end, they're recognized for their incredible contributions. It's a fun, whimsical way to show young readers the importance of embracing differences and valuing everyone.

The book's release coincides with ongoing conversations about social justice and the need for greater acceptance in our communities. From efforts to create more inclusive workplaces to calls for empathy and understanding in schools, the book encourages children to see the strength in diversity, showing that sometimes it's the individuals who seem “different” that hold the key to solving big problems.

By the end of the story, the previously dismissive Queen Bea invites the Ooey-Gooeys to join the celebration after they've saved the day, illustrating the transformative power of inclusion and respect. It's a reminder that even the most unlikely heroes have something special to offer.

Celebrate inclusion, teamwork, and the unique talents that everyone has to offer!



A trio of undesirable Ooey-Gooeys—a wisecracking worm, a swift centipede, and a charming snail—share a yard with Queen Bea, the belle of the insect community, who makes it clear they are not invited to her party. When a “Bigfoot”—a human—arrives with his high-powered gardening tool, the Ooey-Gooeys become unlikely heroes as they use their skills and wits to save their community and worm their way into our hearts.

About the Author

[Sylvia Rouss](#) grew up in California and first began writing for the children in her preschool class. As an early childhood educator, she was the recipient of awards for both creative teaching and excellence in Jewish education.

Sylvia credits the children in her classroom for her inspiration. She is the author of over fifty published books, including the *Sammy Spider* series as well as the *Littlest* series. She received the National Jewish Book Award for her story *The Littlest Pair*, and the Sydney Taylor Honor Award for *Sammy Spider's First Trip to Israel* and *Mitzvah the Mutt*. *Sammy Spider's First Shavuot* and *Tali's Jerusalem Scrapbook* were named Sydney Taylor Notable Books.

Sylvia resides in Oxnard with her husband Jeff, and has three married adult children and seven grandchildren. Besides family and writing, she maintains a busy schedule that includes lecturing and book readings throughout the United States, Europe, and Israel. Her stories have been translated into Spanish, Dutch, French, and Portuguese.

[David Titcher](#) is a writer and creator of multiple television series. He may be best known as the creator of TNT's blockbuster franchise *The Librarian*, starring Noah Wyle. David was nominated for both a WGA Award and a Saturn Award for his script; *The Librarians: The Next Chapter* will premiere on the CW in 2024.

David has been particularly successful in writing for children, contributing to shows from the NBC sitcom *Punky Brewster* to animated series by Disney such as *The Little Mermaid*, *Darkwing Duck*, and *Bonkers*. David also co-created the series *Houdini & Doyle*, which was internationally produced by Fox and ITV. Most recently, David sold *Epidemic*, an original one-hour medical mystery series, to NBC.

When it comes to feature films, David wrote Disney's *Around the World in 80 Days* starring Jackie Chan and Arnold Schwarzenegger, as well as the teen cult film *Morgan Stewart's Coming Home*. He has also written and sold a variety of original features, TV movies, miniseries, and episodes to buyers ranging from Joel Silver to Jim Henson to Steven Spielberg.

About the Illustrator

[Rick Penn-Kraus](#) is a freelance creative director specializing in variety: graphic design, photography, illustration, social media content, software instruction, motion graphics, fine art, and more. Rick began his career in magazines and then book publishing, leading the graphics departments at Price Stern Sloan and Dove Books. From there he moved into international marketing and PR at Hill & Knowlton and Weber Shandwick, where he won numerous awards and juried international design competitions. In addition to his creative work, he also teaches numerous software programs—InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator, Excel, etc.—throughout the country, as well as comic book cartooning and guitar, and has taught at UCLA, Harvard-

Westlake, and New Roads High School in Los Angeles. He currently freelances for a wide variety of clients that have included Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, UC Press, Pepsi, Colliers, Amgen, and many others. Rick also participates actively in numerous volunteer arenas, including performing music at local hospitals, leading the local Cub Scout pack, and helping at schools in the area.

Interviews available upon request.

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

You're Not Invited!: An Ooey-Gooeys Adventure (hardcover, 32 pages, \$26.95 / paperback, 32 pages, \$15.95 / Kindle e-book \$4.99) is available from [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), and other fine booksellers.