

Children's author delights students with stories and songs

There, Joe Consiglio sang his unique songs and told stories about sharks, dogs and an "evil, sinister and wicked" ice cream truck driver who just wouldn't stop for kids on Sweet Street.

Consiglio, a children's author, musician and ninth-grade teacher in Wilmington, Del., came to make the elementary students laugh, but he also urged them to write their own stories.

"All you have to do is start with a character, give that character a problem and go from there," he said Wednesday afternoon.

The author of "Big Billy and the Ice Cream Truck That Wouldn't Stop (Tales from Sweet Street)" picked up a guitar about 15 years ago and started writing music because he felt the typical children's songs were not very relatable for kids.

Some of his songs, with lyrics like "are we there yet" and "don't make me pull over" scored big laughs from the crowd, as did a ditty about sharks.

Another song about Pablo, a possessed dog that can't bark but can sing lines from popular Tom Jones songs, drew similar laughter.

Consiglio mixed his songs and stories with a central message about writing.

"I'm here because I write, not because I'm a writer," Consiglio said. "I enjoy writing. Most of what I write is terrible, and I want the kids to understand that writing is something you just do.

"You do it to express yourself, to communicate. You do it because you love it. It's a process you just commit to and you can do this."

There was also a Sweet Street connection Wednesday. Sandy Solmon, founder and CEO of Sweet Street Desserts, decided to sponsor the event after receiving a call from state Sen. Judy Schwank, a Ruscombmanor Township Democrat and a volunteer tutor at the school.

Each class is receiving a copy of the book, as well.

"I thought this was a match for things that are important to me and for Sweet Street," Solmon said. "The kids are so excited to have an author in the school. If that excitement can continue on in their lives, what a gift we can give them."

Consiglio's Sweet Street story has a surprise ending that he hoped the kids would keep with them.

"If you do something nice, even to someone who doesn't deserve it, you might change the world," he said. "So try it out."

Kasonei Wood, 8, a third-grader, said it was exciting to have a children's author speak at the school.

"It made me want to write my own stories," he said. "Every time when the ice cream truck driver drove away, that was kind of funny."

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Reading Eagle: Bill Uhrich | Joe Consiglio, author of "Big Billy and the Ice Cream Truck that Wouldn't Stop (Tales from Sweet Street)," visited Glenside Elementary School for an assembly Wednesday. In addition to the assembly, each class will receive one copy of this book.