

LITERACY

# B.C. group connects children's authors with their audience

BY TRACY SHERLOCK

VANCOUVER SUN

As children's author Shar Levine will tell you, writers are real people.

"They live down the street, they're in front of you in the supermarket lineup," Levine said. "You may not realize that your favourite book was written by the lady standing in front of you."

Levine is president of the Children's Writers & Illustrators of British Columbia Society (CWILL), pronounced quill, a group of 150 members that is supporting The Vancouver Sun's Raise-a-Reader initiative.

CWILL's members have something to offer kids of every age through public appearances and readings, Levine said.

"Jean Stuchner makes you pee your pants — she is cripplingly funny," Levine said. "Then you've got a woman like Irene Watts, who is a Holocaust survivor and who writes about that for children. She takes your breath away."

Interacting with authors and illustrators lets kids know they can become writers, Levine said.

"It brings literature alive. They make you laugh and they pull at your heartstrings," she said. "In fact, many of our members became authors because they heard an author speak."

Levine has written more than 70 science books with her writing partner Leslie Johnstone. She fell into becoming a children's author after she operated a science-related toy store — Einstein's on Dunbar Street — for many years.

"We try to make it so that you can relate the science around you to real life," Levine said.

Although her books are for kids aged six to 12, Levine says adults also enjoy reading them.

"When you get a picture of an ant's anus in 3-D, you usually get an adult's attention," Levine said.

Levine is also known as the science lady, and her books are filled with interactive science experiments. "It's important



Shar Levine is president of B.C.-based CWILL.

won numerous awards, including the Eve Savory Award for Science Communication from the BC Innovation Council in 2006 and Parents Choice approved awards in 2007 and 2008.

Schools and libraries can contact local authors for guest appearances through the CWILL website ([www.cwill.bc.ca](http://www.cwill.bc.ca)). CWILL has donated about 50 signed copies of its members' books to the Raise-a-Reader campaign.

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## Raise-a-Reader

**Help us raise a reader today by making a donation. All proceeds raised for the campaign, which culminates Sept. 29, support public libraries and children's literacy programs in B.C.**

**There are three ways to donate:**

- Online at [www.raiseareader.com](http://www.raiseareader.com)
- Call 1-866-637-READ (7323) or 604-605-2304
- Mail in a cheque payable to: