For Immediate Release:

**New Middle Grade Novel *REAL* Addresses Autism and Bullying**

Thirteen-year-old Charity may have no voice and an unruly body, but she’s determined to learn at her new school. Can everyone see past her autism?

*REAL* is perhaps the first middle-grade novel told through the eyes of a girl with nonspeaking autism. The authors Carol Cujec and Peyton Goddard state their goal as helping kids to view autism as a different way of experiencing the world and to see the magic that happens when all kids are valued and included.

The story was inspired by the experiences of Goddard, whose unpredictable body and inability to speak led people to assume she was mentally challenged. Once she gained a dependable mode of communication, she graduated from college as valedictorian.

Goddard, who types to talk writes, "Difference is in all of us. Fear it we do not need.” Her message centers on “changing this worrisome world” through compassionate understanding and support for all.

Cujec and Goddard hope their story builds empathy in readers for all who are different, ultimately protecting those most vulnerable from bullying and abuse. “Autism Awareness Month should really celebrate Autism Acceptance and Welcoming,” says Cujec.

***Author resources include tips on inclusion and tips for making friends with someone who’s different.***

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