

For Immediate Release:

Peggy Richard

313.322.8239

Peggy.Richard@dfcufinancial.com

DFCU Financial Sponsors Caldecott Honoree Illustrator Who Shares Message of Inclusion with Birmingham Students

Birmingham, Mich., June 2018—“Pictures are tools designed to send messages,” according to Christian Robinson, Caldecott award-winning American illustrator of children's books. If this is true, then Robinson’s message to the world, and especially children, is about celebrating our differences and similarities.

On behalf of the Birmingham Education Foundation (BEF) and sponsor DFCU Financial, Robinson recently visited several grade school classrooms in Birmingham to share his special open dialog of creativity, inclusion and following your dreams, whatever your circumstances.

“We are thrilled to be able to bring Christian Robinson to our schools, and so grateful for DFCU Financial for their support in making this happen,” said BEF Executive Director Alison Hendry. “It has been wonderful for students to have the opportunity to meet the man behind the pictures in many of their favorite books, and more importantly, for students to learn more about how he went from someone who liked to doodle, to an animator, to an illustrator.”

Robinson’s funny, relaxed, honest approach draws students in to a story that started out with difficulties. “Growing up, I couldn’t control my circumstances but I could create a world I wanted to see,” said Christian, who as a child lived in a one bedroom apartment in LA with his grandmother and siblings. His mother, who struggled with addiction, was in and out of prison.

Robinson did dream big and after applying and graduating from the California Institute of the Arts, landed a job at PIXAR Studios. This resulted in a book deal and the rest, they say, is history.

Collaborations with such award winning children’s book authors as Matt de la Pena and Cynthia Rylant helped earn Robinson his own Caldecott Honor, awarded to the illustrator by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA). The Caldecott and Newbery Medals are the most prestigious American children's book awards.

“I think of my characters as real living things,” said Robinson who starts each book illustrating project with small drawings on sticky notes “because it makes it less overwhelming and scary.”

It’s up to me to figure out what needs to be communicated. I think of myself as an observer,” said Robinson. But, he was engaging students in a big way with words and drawings, videos and music at the Bingham Farms Elementary School.

Said Dan Brownrigg, fifth grade teacher, “It was great to have Christian Robinson here, because it is important for all students to see themselves represented in role models.”

Russ Facione, Bingham Farms Principal agrees, “We encourage all our students to be their Bingham Best. If his presentation leads one student to be their best by being an artist, than this visit was well worth it.”

The Birmingham Education Foundation's mission is to raise private funds to motivate academic excellence and innovation in the Birmingham Public School District. Each year, the BEF gives more than \$100,000 in grants to teachers to fund their great ideas, as well as running programming to enhance learning for BPS students. "The BEF is grateful to DFCU for their continued support.

DFCU Financial is happy to lend support. "We are inspired and amazed at how teachers continue to find creative ways to utilize this funding and instruct our children," said President and CEO Mark Shobe. DFCU provides major gifts to several education foundations around the state. Find out about other donations at dfcufinancial.com.

Said one Bingham Best fifth grader, "He helped me learn something new about how he illustrated each book and I liked that he uses his imagination to communicate."