



## READING PROGRAM NEWS

by Kathleen Szabo

### The 2010 UMW Reading Program

#### CHILDREN:

**Great Joy** by Kate DiCamillo

*Spiritual Growth*

This Newberry-award-winning author (*The Tale of Despereaux*, *Because of Winn Dixie*) has written a lovely holiday picture book. On the night of the Christmas pageant a little girl can hardly remember her lines because she is worried about a homeless organ grinder and his monkey who are out in the cold. When she finally speaks she shares the true meaning of Christmas. The story gives parents an opportunity to discuss poverty and homelessness with their children. The ambiguous ending allows children to suggest what they would like to happen to the organ grinder.

**Louis Sockalexis: Native American Baseball Pioneer** by Bill Wise *Community*

This is the story of the first Native American to play major league baseball and how the Penobscot tribe member's love of baseball allowed him to overcome prejudice. He played for the Cleveland Spiders in the late 1890s. Many think that Sockalexis was largely responsible for the Cleveland Spiders becoming the Cleveland Indians. The illustrations help evoke the time period and emotion of the game very well.

**Armando and the Blue Tarp School** by Edith Hope Fine *Education for Mission*

Armando lives near a garbage dump in Tijuana, Mexico. He and his family eke out a meager living by trash-picking. One day a teacher arrives, lays a tarp on the ground and starts a school. The boy begs his parents to allow him to attend and they finally realize that education is the only way for Armando to escape the misery. The story is based on the life of David Lynch, a New York City teacher who went to Tijuana in 1980 to teach children living at a dump. There are Spanish words sprinkled throughout the story to give it authenticity. A glossary is included.

#### YOUTH:

**Something to Sing About** by C.C. Payne

*Nurturing for Community*

Jamie Jo is so afraid of bees that she won't go outside without her mother. This is a wholesome, humorous story of family, friendship and overcoming fears through faith.

**Cecilia's Year** by Susan Gonzales Abraham

*Education for Mission*

14-year-old Cecilia dreams of going to school to become a teacher; but women in traditional Hispanic households in rural New Mexico during the 1930s grew up to be farm wives and mothers. This fictionalized story of the author's mother is told over the course of a year, one story for each month. It tells a tale of a bygone era of immigrant, rural life. Included are family photos and a glossary of Spanish proverbs. An endnote tells what happened to the real Cecilia.

## **ADULTS**

**My Faith So Far: a Story of Conversion and Confusion** by Patton Dodd

*Education for Mission*

High school senior Patton Dodd has done too many drugs, drunk too many beers and been with too many girls. He is sick of lying to his parents. He longs to clean up his act. His sister invites him to her charismatic mega-church. There he becomes immersed in the spirit, speaking in tongues, dancing and singing his heart out during services. He grabs hold of Christianity like a drowning man a rope and joins Bible study groups, becomes a prayer warrior with a group of other young men and prays without ceasing when he is alone. He dumps all his secular CDs and only listens to Christian music. He separates himself from all his friends because they are all drug-users. He struggles. Eventually he is lured to a party with his old buddies and smokes pot again. It feels good, but he is filled with remorse. Eventually he decides to cut all ties and attend Oral Roberts University in the fall. He meets many new friends with whom he can share his faith. But he begins to doubt. His journalism teacher would rather pray than teach. The school president, Oral Roberts' son Richard, conducts a healing service and lays hands on each student. Many fall down at the touch of his hands. Patton realizes, when it is his turn, that people are falling because Rev. Roberts is forcibly pushing them over. These and many other experiences start to gnaw at his faith. After a year he decides to return home to a state university. Over the coming years he finds and loses his faith many times. About his search for God, piety, and life's questions he concludes, "the only honest way for this story to end," he says, "is for it to come to silent rest right in the middle".

Dodd tells his faith story with humor and brutal honesty. He is a keen observer of society. Like many young people he is very idealistic and therefore, very hard on himself. After talking to some more moderate clergy he came to realize that doubt is part of faith. One can not grow in his faith without examining it. Even though he is young, I think that anyone who has ever questioned his faith can identify with Patton. He voices doubts that many of us are reluctant to admit. I appreciated his honesty and I think this book would make a good subject for a discussion group about the nature of faith.

Dodd is now married with one child. He is in graduate school studying religion and journalism. He writes for the religion web-mag [killingthebuddha](http://killingthebuddha.com) and is editor of [Beliefnet](http://Beliefnet.com).