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Children's Book Brings CUMAC's Mission To Life

By Jessica Stenstrom

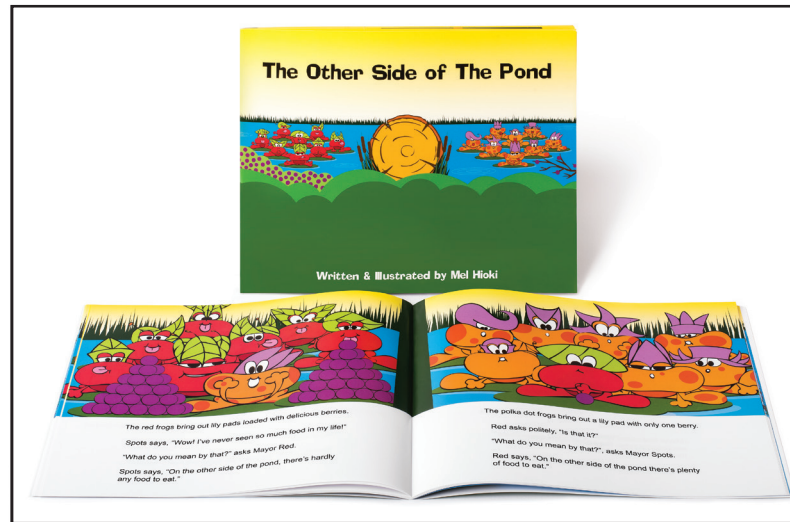
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A book inspired by an outreach experience in a soup kitchen will help raise funds to address hunger through CUMAC.

"The Other Side of the Pond" written and illustrated by Mel Hioki is a children's story based on an experience he had at Cornerstone in Englewood, N.J.

"We prepared and served a meal for a soup kitchen that was on one side of the highway," Hioki said. "On the other side of the highway was a nice shopping mall. The big question for the people at the soup kitchen was where they were going to get their next meal? The big question for the people at the shopping mall was what they should buy or where they should eat?"

Hioki said he couldn't get over the fact that the two locations were so close to each other, with people like himself, only divided by a highway. This became the basis for his book. The highway is the log, the soup kitchen is one community and the shopping mall is the other community. The two communities of frogs are alike except that one community has plenty of berries to eat and the other doesn't. With the log in the way they are separated from one another, until finally one master leap frogger from each community is able to transcend the log and they learn about one another. The end result is a beaver



'The Other Side of the Pond' is a children's book that shows how overcoming boundaries can help those in need.

crew removing the logs and a big party where all the food is shared among the frogs.

Hioki, who has been a volunteer at CUMAC for nine years and is currently on the CUMAC board, sees his book being used as a teaching tool for children.

"I envisioned the book to be used as a hook to create hunger awareness for children," he said, "to make them aware there could be hungry people in need of

help, right next door."

There will be a book release party from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, June 20th at Hackensack United Methodist Church. There will be a reading of the book, refreshments and Hioki will also be signing copies of the book.

"The Other Side of the Pond" can be purchased at <http://www.cumacecho.org/book.html>. The book costs \$20 with \$10 covering production costs and \$9 will

benefitting CUMAC. The final \$1 will be donated to Hackensack UMC where Rev. Eugene Kim is currently serving.

"If it weren't for Rev. Eugene Kim who introduced me to Outreach, this book would have never been created," Hioki said.

Hioki said his experience serving at CUMAC also motivated him to publish the book.

"After my sister Joyce passed away in car accident, I found out from my Mom it was an organization like CUMAC that helped her in her time of need," he said. "I was shocked to find out and had no idea she was having difficult times.

"Joyce was a very kind and caring person. So I made a promise to God that I would dedicate my work for CUMAC to Joyce, so her love and kindness towards people would live on. She was the other side of my pond."

Hioki said there are so many talented, passionate, hardworking and caring people at CUMAC from Executive Director Pat Bruger, to the board, to the staff, to the workers and volunteers.

"There are so many people who work behind the scenes to make CUMAC run," he said. I would ask myself, 'What's the best way I can help using my God given talents?' So, this book is my contribution."

As far as what's next, be on the look-out for a sequel involving the little yellow duck on the last page of the book.