



Children’s author inspires children to read with help of bunny characters Max & Ruby

When it comes to finding inspiration for her children’s books, author/illustrator Rosemary Wells finds that the most important tools in her kit are affixed firmly to either side of her head: her ears.

As a mom to three daughters, Wells would listen carefully to their natural conversations to gain a true sense of how children speak and interact with each other without the meddling of an adult.

“If I had come downstairs instead of taking notes upstairs, I would have ruined the whole thing,” she said. “I have a different and private sense of humor. It is based on actual, real childhood. It’s based on how children are together – my own children, and my children’s friends.”

That is also the pattern for her books, which feature child-aged characters without interference from grownups – who are acknowledged, but not present.

About 350 parents and children crowded into the Youth Center at the Fort Worth Public Library-Central on Sunday, Jan. 12, to see Wells, who was in town to encourage literacy and to celebrate the donation of the original artwork that appeared in *Bunny Mail*. The art highlights two of Wells’ most enduring characters, bunny Max and

his older sister Ruby.

The framed artwork is on the walls of the Library’s Youth Center, positioned mere feet off the ground to be more visible to younger Max & Ruby fans.

“I want the kids who come to this library to be able to see real artwork, by a real artist, in real watercolor, done by hand and not by computer,” Wells said.

She read her book *Bunny Money* and then also discussed her artistic process with the children. She starts every workday with 10 minutes of practice – drawing, painting, watercolor – much like an athlete warms up before a competition. She works slowly, steadily and deliberately, she said, and the art takes a lot of time to complete.

Library Director Manya Shorr said that when she learned Wells was looking for libraries to house her original art, she was excited. But that excitement grew when she learned Wells herself would visit to dedicate the display.

As the Library strives to be the literary hub of Fort Worth, Shorr said Wells’ visit is a perfect example of drawing the community together in the name of reading. The artwork, Shorr said, can serve as an inspiration for children. “This

art will be on the walls of the Library for many years to come,” she said.

Shorr introduced Fort Worth City Councilwoman Ann Zadeh (District 9), whose district includes the Central Library but, just as important, exemplifies someone who loves to read.

Zadeh said that growing up, her local library was a big part of her life. She would check out books every week with the help of a librarian she considered to be “her librarian.” She has passed that love of reading on to her children.

“When I picked up my 22-year-old son at the airport the other day, he was standing in the baggage claim reading

a book,” Zadeh told the crowd.” Not a book on his phone, not a book on a Kindle, not a book on an iPad, an actual physical book.”

Zadeh introduced another person whose love of reading has made an impact in her neighborhood. With the help of her family, their books and her father’s 4th-grade classroom collection, Penelope Droege started a library in her family’s garage this past summer to share books with other children. Droege introduced Wells to the group.

The program ended with children making Max & Ruby-themed crafts and Wells signing personal copies of her books for guests.