

BY MEGAN AULT REGNERUS

Local writer Michele Corriel celebrates publication of two books this season after years of hard work

While readers might recognize Michele Corriel's name from her years of freelance writing for newspapers and magazines, what many might not know is her passion for writing fiction for children and young adults. But that's about to change, as Corriel's near decade of diligently writing and submitting books to big-name editors in NYC and the like has finally paid off.

It was two years ago that she got that phone call that every writer dreams about. An editor at Blooming Tree Press called to tell her they wanted to publish her middle grade novel, *Fairview Felines: A Newspaper Mystery*, which will hit shelves this September. Ironically, it was just three days later that the phone rang again. This time it was an editor from Mountain Press wanting to buy her non-fiction picture book titled *Weird Rocks*, which will be out this holiday season.

As you might expect, many of Corriel's topics spring from what she knows. For nine years Corriel was a reporter for Belgrade's High Country Independent Press. "I love newspapers, I think they're so important to a democracy," says Corriel. Hence, the major setting for *Fairview Felines* is in a newsroom, the protagonist a budding reporter solving a mystery as he writes.

Corriel's husband is a geologist, so she has absorbed a lot of rock knowledge throughout her 18 years of marriage. So writing *Weird Rocks* was an obvious topic for her to share with young readers. While Corriel has several other books in the works, she is also the regional advisor for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI). One of the major tasks of her job is to bring accomplished editors and agents to town for the annual SCBWI conference, where attendees have the opportunity to share their work with fellow writers and the publishing world.



Mackenzie Redmond

Asked to offer advice for writers aspiring to get published, Corriel offers the following: "If you're a writer, you have to write every day." Even when Corriel was working at the High Country Independent Press, she made it a habit to get up an hour early every day to work on her own writing projects.

Also, "Never give up," she says. Corriel is the mother of a teenage daughter, and says part of her determination is tied to being a parent. "I just couldn't live with myself if I gave up on this dream," she says. "I want to be a person my daughter looks up to."

And finally, "You have to have patience," she offers. "Everything takes a long time in the book world."

Happily, the time has come for Corriel where hard work and patience have paid off.

Michele Corriel will be celebrating the release of her novel *Fairview Felines* at The Country Bookshelf in downtown Bozeman on Saturday, September 11th, from 1 to 3 p.m.. The public is welcome to join her for a reading, book signing, and cupcakes.

To learn more about SCBWI or the annual conference for children's writers and illustrators (held this year on September 25th-26th) email Michele Corriel at michele.corriel@gmail.com.

BALANCE: What do you consider your greatest strength?

MC: Perseverance. Once I decide to do something I don't stop until it's done.

BALANCE: What do you consider your greatest weakness?

MC: Besides chocolate, I'd have to say I have a tendency to say whatever is on my mind...and sometimes that gets me into trouble.

BALANCE: Who are your heroes/role models?

MC: Batman. He doesn't have any superpowers, but he can still save the world...or at least Gotham City.

BALANCE: What's your favorite book?

MC: That's a tough one, so I'm going to give you my top five (hey, I'm a writer!): *Ulysses*, by James Joyce, *The Book Thief*, by Mark Zusak, *A Winter's Tale*, by Mark Helprin, and anything by Tana French or Jess Walter. There are tons more, like anything by Mickey Spillane and Raymond Chandler, but I've probably already gone too far.

BALANCE: What is the key to balancing your roles in personal, family, career and health matters?

MC: You mean they aren't all one? Seriously, I do believe it's all connected and so it's not a matter of balance but more a matter of flexibility and flow.

BALANCE: What is the best advice you ever used?

MC: Just do it.

BALANCE: What's your dream job?

MC: I already have it!

BALANCE: What do you most want to change about yourself?

MC: I'm too hard on myself sometimes. I'd like to be able to look in the mirror and say I love myself just the way I am.

BALANCE: What do you most love about yourself?

MC: I love my sense of humor. I can sit in a room by myself and make myself laugh.

BALANCE: What do you do to relax?

MC: I love, love, love to cook. Give me the opportunity to make a gourmet meal for 20 and I'm in heaven.