

# SHARING STORIES

## Butler Students Shine Historical Spotlight

By Cory Ahlersmeyer

When Anna and Bobby blew out the candles on their 10th birthday cake, they didn't wish for toys, candy or even a puppy. What they did wish for led them on a journey like no other.

Their story, chronicled in *The Gifts of Indiana: A Tale of Three Birthdays and One Grand Adventure* takes readers on a magical birthday trip through Indiana history. The twins meet, among others, Benjamin Harrison, Madam C.J. Walker, Eli Lilly and even Ryan White.

Written by Butler University students, the chapter book is aimed at fourth graders learning about Indiana's state history. The Butler team found, unfortunately, that current Indiana curriculum rarely features historical figures from the STEM or entrepreneurship fields, nor did a historical-fictional account exist to help shine the light on these important people.

"Our work on the project expanded our appreciation for the legacy Hoosiers have left on the world in the past and present," shares Eileen Carroll, one of the book's co-writers. "As future teachers and parents – in some cases, long-time residents of the state – we wanted to create this project to provide a narrative to connect Indiana history to our lives today, a premise which is scarce in the current book market."

Led by faculty advisor Erin Albert, associate professor of pharmacy, the book was written by students from a multitude of academic disciplines, including pharmacy, marketing, elementary education and graphic design.

Albert has guided numerous Butler student-led book projects, including *He Huffed and He Puffed But ... A Tale of a Wolf with Asthma, Pharmacy and Me*, and *Max Greene and the Vaccine Team*.

"We had several students from the College of Education that had taken numerous courses in children's literature," Albert explains. "They really put the lens of children's literature on the book to make it relevant to fourth graders, which is really much harder than it sounds."

### Many hands play a part

Students from four of Butler's six colleges came together to make this book a reality, each bringing their own strengths to the table. Writing, advertising,



publishing and distribution were completed entirely by the students.

Carroll, a sixth-year pharmacy student, and four senior education majors – Katy English, Anastasia Luc, Matthew O'Brien and Kimberly Van Wyk – wrote and developed the story.

Taylor Bowen, freshman art and design major, coordinated the illustrations and provided the vivid watercolor artwork.

Catrina Cranfill and Chloe Pahl, senior and junior marketing majors, respectively, developed the marketing and brand development strategy and coordinated fundraising efforts. The book was initially paid for via the crowdfunding site Indiegogo, closing last January with almost \$2,000 from 25 donors.

When discussing the multidisciplinary effort, Carroll says, "(The book) gave me the opportunity to complete a project and work with students that I would not have otherwise had in my training as a pharmacist.

"I feel more prepared to work collaboratively and identify the strengths of other professionals to most efficiently complete a project."

That too is part of a college education. Butler, like many universities, has long believed that learning goes beyond tests and quizzes. Learning by doing is "a vital component to a well-rounded liberal arts education."

"College students at Butler always seek ideas and ways to make a difference in the world and create something that matters – no matter from what college," Albert adds.

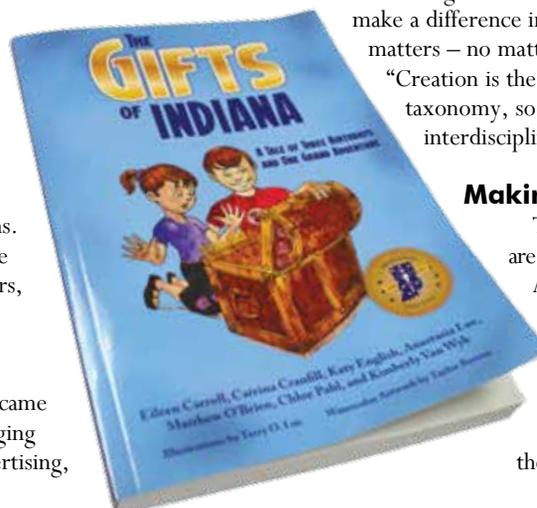
"Creation is the highest form of learning on Bloom's taxonomy, so we always try to create project-based, interdisciplinary opportunities for our students."

### Making the story come to life

The hand-drawn illustrations for the book are courtesy of Terry Luc, father of co-writer Anastasia Luc. Terry is an illustrator and graphic designer from Chicago who has been creating pop-surrealistic illustrations for more than 30 years.

"My intention was for the artwork to have a real immediate, sketch-like feel to them," Terry contends. "My method of work

Continued on page 42



## Sharing Stories

Continued from page 36

was to read each story, discuss drawing ideas with my daughter, Annie, and then sketch out the illustrations in a pretty rapid manner. I did this with regular pencil and paper.

“There was no preliminary work. The sketch is the only record and it is the final artwork for each page.”

The elder Luc was also very captivated by the book, and not just

because his daughter worked on it.

“I was extremely impressed with the research the students did on each historical person that they selected for the book,” Terry confesses. “I also thought the book was very readable, interesting and informative for the fourth grade target Indiana students.

“Most importantly, this book will keep alive the stories of these important historical figures. Where else will a student hear or learn about an Ernie Pyle, or a Gene Stratton-Porter or a Ryan White? These people fall outside of what is generally taught in history class. This book will keep their memories alive for another generation, at least, in Indiana. Who knows, maybe a student will be inspired to seek out the music of Wes Montgomery. That is something that might only happen because of reading about him in this book.”

Not only did Luc create the illustrations, but also a companion set of 13-by-19-inch posters for teachers to use in their lesson plans.

### Reaching out

The initial run of more than 1,000 books is down to fewer than 150 copies still remaining at the Butler University Bookstore. Governor and First Lady Pence are sharing the book with fourth-grade classrooms around the state as part of their travels.

While many of the students who worked on the book have since graduated, a second run is in the works and books will be available soon on Amazon.



Members of the Butler student team that created *The Gifts of Indiana*.

**RESOURCES:** *The Gifts of Indiana* at [www.giftsofindiana.com](http://www.giftsofindiana.com) | Terry Luc (companion prints available) at [www.terryluc.com](http://www.terryluc.com)

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