

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Magic-filled middle grade book promotes environmentalism

First installment in the Brave Girls Collection will benefit the Long Island Sound

NEW HAVEN, CT – Publishing on World Wetlands Day, February 2, 2023, “Artemis Sparke and the Sound Seekers Brigade” (Fitzroy Books / Regal House) is the first installment in the new Brave Girls Collection by Kimberly Behre Kenna. Part of the proceeds from book sales will benefit [Save the Sound](#), a nonprofit based in New Haven that works to fight climate change and promote ecological restoration in the Long Island Sound area, where the story is set.

Heartfelt and humorous, “Artemis Sparke” follows a group of underdogs who conjure up the ghosts of historic ecologists to help save a salt marsh and appease Mother Nature.

More about the novel: When Artemis Sparke has had it with humans, she heads to the nearby salt marsh to hang out with the birds, plants and mollusks who don’t make a big deal of her stutter. The shoreline sanctuary is predictable, unlike her family and friends, and the data in her science journal proves it. But one day that data goes haywire, and her bird friend RT confirms it: the salt marsh is dying. Artemis discovers that the historic hotel where she lives with her mom may be part of the problem, but speaking up would mean confronting the cranky hotel owner who happens to be her mom’s boyfriend and boss. Artemis conjures up help from deceased ecologists, and as she works to untangle their clues, she finds family secrets that could be the key to saving the salt marsh. An empowering read about the importance of finding your voice, “Artemis Sparke” will strike a chord with kid activists everywhere.





“Artemis Sparke and the Sound Seekers Brigade”

Kimberly Kenna | February 2, 2023 | Fitzroy Books, Regal House Press | Middle Grade
Paperback | ISBN: 978-1646033133 | \$9.99



KIMBERLY BEHRE KENNA: After years as an adolescent and family counselor, and then as a fifth grade teacher of ecology and language arts, Kimberly returned to school for her MA in creative writing from Wilkes University. Her middle-grade novel, “Artemis Sparke and the Sound Seekers Brigade” was a finalist and received Honorable Mention in the 2019 Tassy Walden New Voices in Children’s Literature Competition. It will be published by Fitzroy Books 2/2/23. Another book in her Brave Girl Collection, “Jett Jamison and the Secret Storm” is forthcoming from Black Rose Publishing 8/3/23. A third in the collection, as yet unpublished, won second place in The Institute of Children’s Literature 2022 MG Mystery First Pages Contest. Her poems and short stories have been published in American Writers Review, Mused, Plumtree Tavern, and Rubbertop Review. Her full-length play, “Ana’s Hummingbird,” was given a staged reading at The Dramatists Guild in NYC. She’s a member of SCBWI and PEN America, and now devotes herself to writing full time. Connect with her at www.kimberlybehrekenna.com

Follow Kimberly Behre Kenna on social media:

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In an interview, Kimberly Behre Kenna can discuss:

- How her career as a fifth grade ecology teacher inspired the story
- Why it’s important for children’s literature to highlight environmental issues as well as other serious themes such as disability and abuse
- What she hopes readers, young and old, will take away from the book
- Her writing process—from research to final revision, from query letters to debut publication



Praise for “Artemis Sparke and the Sound Seekers Brigade”

“Warning: Artemis Sparke is pure energy! Equal parts ecologist, artist, scientist and historian, Art had me riding her tailwind on her mission to protect the delicate salt marsh of Long Island Sound. And, oh my, the stakes are high—environmentally and personally! **Kenna’s well-crafted debut is a timely gift.**”

—Leslie Connor, National Book Award finalist and author of “The Truth as Told by Mason Buttle” and “Anybody Here Seen Frenchie?”

“Featuring a strong and compassionate character, ‘Artemis Sparke and the Sound Seekers Brigade’ is **an engaging story about friendship, protecting nature, and speaking up for what’s right even when it feels like no one will listen.** Some helpful ghosts add layers of humor and mystery to this heartfelt novel.”

—Lynne Kelly, author of “Song for a Whale”

“Kimberly Behre Kenna has written **a terrific middle-grade novel that will inspire readers of all ages...** This entertaining page-turner has unforgettable characters, family drama, ghosts and secrets, surprises and suspense, and, without being pedantic, illuminates the urgency of battling climate change. The world needs more role models like Artemis Sparke.”

—Pamela Gray, screenwriter, “Conviction,” “Music of the Heart,” “A Walk on the Moon”

“A timely theme, nuanced characters, a story brushed with a touch of magic. **Kids will love following the lead of environmentalist Artemis,** as this book is rich with opportunities for science investigations and experiments.”

—Carol Wallach, CT recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

“Birds love Artemis Sparke. Trees love her. Readers, too, will be captivated by this fiery, quirky, and determined twelve-year-old protector of salt marshes. Kimberly Behre Kenna’s debut novel is lively, magical, and wise. **An essential read for these times when the earth is in such urgent need of care and we are in such urgent need of hope.**”

—Ona Gritz, author of “August or Forever”



“A lovely tale full of pluck, passion, perseverance, and a dash of enchantment. **A heartfelt adventure with a courageous young heroine** determined to save her beloved salt marsh against daunting odds.”

—Sandra Waugh, author of “Lark Rising” and “The Adventures of the Flash Gang” series

“Tapping into guidance from the marshland creatures—as well as some ghostly advisors with powerful wisdom to share—Artemis connects a whole team of activists to help fight a major decision. Artemis Sparke’s compassion for others, her environmental concerns, her creative activism, and her powerful voice, will surely spark inspiration to work for change. Kimberly Behre Kenna has written **a page-turning guidebook for the next generation of readers who are inheriting difficult environmental problems, but who—as this book reminds us—have the potential to learn from the past and to create lasting change.**”

—Diana Renn, author of “Trouble at Turtle Pond” and “Tokyo Heist”



An Interview with Kimberly Behre Kenna

1. How did you come up with the idea for this story?

Since I was a child, the outdoors, whether in a tree or on a beach, has provided a calm sanctuary when life got tough as well as a captivating setting for celebration and fun. As a fifth grade teacher, I observed my students' interactions with plants and creatures of the shoreline and noticed they shared my feelings. Those who were most reticent in the classroom (like I was) became animated and passionate while hiking around a salt marsh. We used nature as a resource to write and perform plays that resurrected ghosts of ecologists who tried to solve present day problems. Years later, on a hike, Artemis (aptly named for one of the Greek goddesses we studied) came to me as a whisper in my ear, an invitation to share stories of brave girls who take a grateful stand for nature, and thus for themselves, regardless of personal challenges.

2. You have a background in teaching. How are teaching and being an author alike?

In both roles I need to listen and observe carefully. It's a gift to be in professions such as these, and with that gift comes the responsibility to respect, reflect, and encourage children's words. In the classroom I always look for ways to inspire questions and creative problem-solving. Likewise, as an author, I write in a way that gets kids to wonder and think deeply while also experiencing the inherent joy of the story. In order to succeed as a teacher and a children's book author, one must be authentic (kids can see right through you!) which requires also being vulnerable. While sometimes difficult, allowing kids to see that others have difficult feelings just as they do, we're modeling resilience, honesty, and hope that in the long run can make life more rewarding.

3. Why is the book's setting important to you personally?

The beach has always been my favorite place. The smells, the sounds, and the beauty of it pacify me and remind me of my connection to a bigger picture that extends far beyond myself. Nature reflects the cycle of life and being immersed in it helps me understand the natural order of things even when times are tough. Using the shoreline as a backdrop for Art's journey grew organically, made perfect sense, especially because she doubts her



voice and then realizes that hers is merely one voice of many, both human and non-human, that “speak” to us every day.

4. Tell us about Save the Sound, the organization that will receive a portion of the proceeds from book sales. What is it about their mission that you connect with?

Save the Sound is a local nonprofit that’s been working to keep water, air and land protected and safe for all living things for the past forty years. Having lived on Long Island Sound shoreline the majority of my life, I want to show my gratitude for their hard work. When my fifth grade students studied the ecology of Long Island Sound, it made perfect sense to enrich our investigations by having them show what they’d learned by sharing their knowledge with others. They created magazines about Long Island Sound and sold them, donating the proceeds to Save the Sound. Save the Sound works to educate all ages about preservation, conservation and restoration, a mission I connect with deeply and will always support.

5. What do you hope readers will take away from Artemis Sparke’s journey?

I hope children connect with Artemis and ultimately understand how important and powerful their voice is no matter how it sounds, and that in turn they must respect the voices of others. At times we feel defeated just like Artemis did, but by reaching out to others (forming or joining a brigade!) we can find the help we need to move forward with whatever is meaningful to us. I want readers to have hope for themselves and the future of our planet and know that they can play an important part in its thriving.

6. What would your recommendations be for parents and teachers who want to help get kids excited about environmentalism?

Spend lots of time outdoors playing, observing, keeping open spaces clean and safe. Treat nature as you would a human, with respect and interest. Talk about what you see and hear, and how that will change if even one small part of nature’s web gets disturbed. Encourage kids’ questions, and if you can’t answer them, join them in researching the topic. Show them the importance of a single voice by using yours to make a difference in what you care about. Share your passion.



7. What's next for you? Will you write more adventures highlighting brave girls?

I have several more Brave Girl adventures in the works, one of which comes out just six months after Artemis Sparke's arrival! As I continue to write, and my collection of stories grows, I look forward to interacting with young readers as well as their teachers and parents by sharing ideas about the power of words both spoken and unspoken.