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# Berkeley County students connect with local authors at summer reading event

BY LIBBY STANFORD LSTANFORD@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

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Annie Lee and her daughter Abigail, 8, and son Matthew, 5, speak with author Angela May about her new novel “The Islande” during a summer reading event at College Park Middle School in Ladson on Tuesday, June 15, 2021. Gavin McIntyre/Staff

BY GAVIN MCINTYRE GMCINTYRE@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

When Angela May attended College Park Middle School, she didn’t expect to become a published author one day.

At the time, she was simply trying to get through the most awkward phase in anyone’s life. Now an adult, May returned to the Ladson school to sign her new book “The Islanders,” which she wrote alongside New York Times bestselling author Mary

Alice Monroe.

“To be able to come back and hopefully encourage them to say, ‘You know what? Keep powering forward, keep showing up for class, keep putting up your best effort, all of that is helping your future.’ It feels so awesome,” May said at a book-signing event.

May and Monroe went to the school on June 15, the release date of “The Islanders,” to sign and give out copies of the book as part of the school’s summer reading kickoff event. Because of a sponsorship from the Berkeley Electric Cooperative, the two authors were able to give a copy of the book to sixth and seventh graders at the school.



Gina Maxie (left) and Joe Grammar hand copies of “The Islanders” to author Angela May as she greets students during a summer reading event at College Park Middle School in Ladson on Tuesday, June 15, 2021. Gavin McIntyre/ Staff

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NEWS



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The book, which is set on Dewees Island just north of Isle of Palms, follows an 11-year-old named Jake as he's forced to spend the summer on the island with his grandmother. Jake and his two new friends, Macon and Lovie, go on an adventure throughout the island, learning about the environment and developing a love of nature.

The book is the first for May and the 28th for Monroe. The two women, who both live in the Charleston area, have worked together for years, with May being Monroe's assistant and public relations manager.

While Monroe is experienced in writing all kinds of books, "The Islanders" is the first book she's written dedicated to children ages 8 to 12. Because that age group is likely to turn to technology for entertainment, the two authors wanted to encourage readers to get out and explore nature.



Author Mary Alice Monroe (left) talks to Madison Karcher, Yessenia Ramirez and Lacey Keller during a summer reading event at College Park Middle School in Ladson on Tuesday, June 15, 2021. Monroe and Angela May passed out copies of their new novel "The Islanders." Gavin McIntyre/Staff

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“We wanted to write a story that brought kids to a remote place out in nature where the children would, through our characters, discover how much fun it is to unplug and get outside and explore and see what’s out there,” Monroe said.

The event was the first of its kind for the school. After a year and a half of pandemic learning, Principal Ingrid Dukes said the school decided to go all out.



College Park Middle School students receive copies of author Angela May and Mary Alice Monroe's new novel "The Islanders" during a summer reading event at their school on Tuesday, June 15, 2021, in Ladson. Gavin McIntyre/Staff  
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#### NEWS

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To fit the "The Islanders" theme, the school decorated the parking lot with sand, beach chairs, pool noodles, beach balls and umbrellas. They also gave every student a gift card to Chick-fil-A and allowed them to talk one-on-one with the authors and hear more about the book.

“Nothing is more important for a child to do than read,” Dukes said. “So if they engage in that and read this book ... and go ‘God, that was great,’ then we’ve gained a reader and we’ve helped a child become a learner in a whole different way.”

More than just an opportunity to encourage students to read, the event also served as a way to celebrate May. The school had May’s yearbook photos printed out and put on signs as a nod to her time at the school.

“It just makes us amazingly proud,” Dukes said. “It shows kids that there’s never a dream that’s out of reach, as long as you just believe that you can do it.”



#### NEWS

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#### LIBBY STANFORD

Libby Stanford covers education at The Post and Courier. A Colorado native, she joined The Post and Courier from the Summit Daily News in Summit County, Colorado. She graduated from the University of Missouri with a degree in journalism and Spanish.