**2023 FCWC Children’s Writing Intensive**

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**Six Tips to Make Your Book Signing Successful**

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ou’re at your book-signing, Sharpie in hand, ready to sign one of the dozens of copies displayed on your table, and no one shows up. Even though you’re positioned in front of Starbucks, people find a path around you to avoid having to make eye contact with you in their quest for java. Ever been there? It can be the longest afternoon of your life; trust me, I speak from experience.

But it doesn’t have to be if you follow these six strategies for a successful book signing.

1. **Make it an event!** Though authors get pretty excited about book signings, most people do not. So, make it an exciting event—not just a signing. For example, when I was planning a book signing event for my book, *Get Your Spirit On! Devotions for Cheerleaders* I went all out. I ordered “Swag bag” items that cheerleaders ages 8 to 12 would love such as: cheer bows, slap bracelets, a notebook and pencil with the name of my book on them, and a cheerleading tote bag that matched my book’s cover and had “Get Your Spirit On!” printed on it. I advertised on all social media outlets that the first 25 people to purchase a book would receive the adorable swag bag, and that’s not all.

Knowing that high school cheerleaders are royalty to younger cheerleaders, I asked two local Varsity cheerleaders to come in uniform and help hand out swag bags and be available for photos. I added in a few cake pops tied up with spirit ribbons, and my boring book signing became a festive event! I also contacted all of the elementary and middle school cheer coaches in the area and let them know about the event. As a result, I had a great turnout and sold many books. And we all did a few cheers. It was a perfect day.

1. **Get the word out ahead of time!** Make an attractive meme on Canva or Word Swag or whatever creative app you like best, promoting your upcoming book signing several weeks ahead of the event. (You might even do a countdown!) Post on all of your social media sites. But don’t stop there! Use what we call “Borrowed Platform” and ask some of your friends with larger followings to share your meme. Make sure your meme has all of the pertinent information about your event—time, date, location, etc. You’ll also want to be sure you use a “sizer” when creating your memes so that your cute creations will fit perfectly on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Unfortunately, it’s not a “one size fits all” social media world. Each

platform has its own sizing preferences.

1. **Write a press release and send it out!** Once you’ve written a press release about your upcoming event, contact the Community Relations Coordinator (CRC) at the bookstore where you’re having the event, and see if he/she has a media list (contact names and numbers of local media) that you could use when sending out your release.

If the CRC doesn’t have a media list compiled, make sure you ask which TV and radio stations you should contact, as well as which area newspapers and magazines might be interested. Working closely with the store’s CRC is always a good idea. I’ve found if I let the CRC know I’m doing all I can to promote the event, that CRC will become excited and promote the event with even more fervor.

1. **Be friendly and proactive!** Too many authorssimply sit at their book table and smile as potential book buyers pass by, but that’s not the best way to run your event. Ask the CRC if you could read your book back in the children’s area several times throughout your allotted time. If that request gets approved, then ask the CRC to announce your upcoming readings in the children’s area a few minutes before each one, adding that the author is on hand to personalize and sign copies. Parents love that!
2. **Lure book buyers to your table!** So, how do you lure potential book buyers to your table? Have an attractive setup—a pretty tablecloth that matches your book, easels to display your books, free bookmarks (Vistaprint is a very affordable way to make bookmarks of your book’s cover), candy or cookies, your business cards or fliers, a freebie of some sort like a coloring sheet to complement your book, etc.

With my book, *C is for Christmas* (Little Lamb Books), my publisher created bookmarks and stickers to hand out to the children—both were a huge hit! As children walked past my table, I’d offer them a free bookmark and sticker. Who doesn’t love a freebie? That almost always lured the children and their parents over to my table, and usually, it resulted in a book sale. I also offered candy canes, which went right along with my book. You might also want to add a signup sheet on your table, asking for the parents’ emails in case they’d like to be notified of your future books and events. (That’s a great way to build your email list.)

1. **Have a Giveaway!** I always put together a gift basket with fun stuff that relates to the book I’m signing. (You don’t want to give away a copy of the book because you want people to buy your book.) For example, when I signed *Dinosaur Devotions* at an area bookstore, I created the cutest gift basket filled with Dinosaur egg candy, dinosaur socks, a dinosaur pencil, dinosaur fun fact cards, a stuffed dino, and a dinosaur picture frame. I tied it all up in ivory tulle and a gorgeous green bow. It was eye-catching on my book table, and it caused people to stop by my table to enter the drawing. Again, once I was able to get them to my book table, I almost always made a sale.

Remember, your enthusiasm about your book is contagious! Be excited, and you’ll create an atmosphere of excitement, and that’s attractive to potential book buyers.