



Lucy's Book Club

A program of the Lucy Daniels Center

presents

bookmarked!

A celebration of reading with children

### Audrey Penn Chosen as Featured Bookmarked! Author for 2012



Ms. Penn is the author of the beloved Chester Raccoon stories including *The Kissing Hand* and *A Pocket Full of Kisses* as well as 12 other picture books for children. More recently she has authored a series of chapter books about Blackbeard the Pirate for older children.

However, Audrey Penn didn't start her professional life as a writer: she was first a ballerina for the New York City Ballet, Danny Diamond Dance Theatre, Stuttgart Ballet, and the National Ballet. She was also a choreographer for the U.S. Figure Skating Team for the Pan American Games and the 1976 Olympic Gymnastics Team. In 1980, after developing juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, Penn was unable to continue dancing and returned to her childhood love of writing stories.

She notes on her website, [www.audreypenn.com](http://www.audreypenn.com):

Because I had done a lot of children's theatre and children's dance, and I have always enjoyed children's literature, I turned to writing children's books for my creative outlet. But my writing career actually began much earlier than 1980. When I was a young girl, I had two older brothers who took great joy in teasing me. When I was in the fourth grade, I began keeping journals of the silly things they would say and do. Then I began adding things my pets did. Finally, I began to write down everything I saw and heard every day.

These journals became Penn's first book, the 1975 Caldecott Medal-nominated *Happy Apple Told Me*.

Penn is perhaps best known for her Chester Raccoon stories, which tackle difficult childhood topics including separation anxiety, the arrival of a new sibling, bullying, moving to a new place, and the death of a loved one in a reassuring and comforting way. ChildrensLit.com reviewer Sharon Levin has described Penn's back-to-school favorite, *The Kissing Hand*, as "an 'awww' book in all the right ways."

She has also written books for older children. Her *Mystery at Blackbeard's Cove* series offers up rollicking tales that combine adventurous youngsters, history, mystery—and Blackbeard's ghost.

In addition to her writing, Penn has developed what she calls a "one-woman educational program," The Writing Penn, which has been featured in many schools, libraries, and children's hospitals. As part of her public appearances at **Bookmarked! 2012**, Penn will lead a workshop and do several free public readings for children. For all the latest details on **Bookmarked! 2012** visit [www.lucysbookclub.org](http://www.lucysbookclub.org) and click on Bookmarked!

Ms. Penn has received many awards for her children's books including *Chronicles of Courage: Very Special Artist Award*, the *Helen Keating Ott Award* for Outstanding Contribution to Children's Literature, the *iParenting Media Award*, and coming in 2012: The *Lucy Daniels Award*, for outstanding contributions to children's literature that supports healthy social and emotional growth.

Ms. Penn will be the third recipient of The Lucy Daniels Award. Prior honorees were Judith Viorst in 2010 and Molly Bang in 2011.