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Unitus Community Credit Union, Local Illustrator Get Creative to Impact Students at Vestal Elementary

PORTLAND, Ore. (March 12, 2017)—For the past 10 years, [Unitus Community Credit Union](#) has invested time, money and other resources to help give third graders at Vestal Elementary in Northeast Portland a brighter future. As part of its commitment to encourage their dreams and aspirations through educational opportunities and individual mentorship, Unitus recently brought in children’s book illustrator Josh Cleland to remind students that each and every one of them is important and special.

Cleland is a renowned local artist who recently illustrated *TAD*, a heartwarming children’s book about a tiny tadpole who doubts his own value in a world of young fish. Thinking he is a fish, Tad does his best to fit in, but struggles to do so because he’s so different. In the end, Tad earns his special place in the pond by discovering he’s not a fish at all, but a frog. As the book’s illustrator, Cleland gave students special insight into the character design.

“I wanted to tell students that every person has a special talent to share with the world and a unique way to shine,” said Cleland. “This is one of the main messages of the book, and drawing allows kids to experience this concept first-hand.”

As a Title 1 school, Vestal is among those schools with the highest poverty levels in Portland. Outside its exceptional and caring staff, many students lack stable personal relationships and the encouragement to appreciate their individual worth and uniqueness. In 2007, Unitus made a commitment to invest in the lives of Ms. Thompson’s third graders, and every student is mentored by a Unitus employee. The credit union also works with the school to thoughtfully engage the classroom.

According to Aimee Berg, Community Development Officer at Unitus, connecting Cleland with Vestal students was an opportunity to creatively reinforce their worth, personality and gifts.

“The book’s message celebrating the value and individuality of each and every person is one these students need to hear as often as possible,” said Berg. “Our partnership with Vestal is about making sure every child knows he or she is celebrated, loved and has something special to offer.”

As a gift, Unitus purchased a copy of *TAD* for each student. Cleland autographed and personalized the books during a cupcake party that followed the drawing lesson.

More information on *TAD* can be found at TADthebook.com.

About Unitus Community Credit Union

Unitus Community Credit Union is a not-for-profit, member-owned financial institution serving people living or working in Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, Polk, Yamhill, Benton, Columbia, Deschutes, Douglas, Hood River, Jackson, Josephine, Linn and Lane counties in Oregon and the state of Washington. Additional information about Unitus is available at www.unitusccu.com or by calling (800) 452-0900.