

# JOIN AUTHORS FOR EARTH DAY

BY DAN GUTMAN

HOW'S THIS FOR getting to the point: Go to [www.authorsforearthday.org](http://www.authorsforearthday.org) right now!

Most of us care about the environment and the future we'll leave to our children and grandchildren. But what can we do—as authors and illustrators—to really make a difference?

In 2008, SCBWI member Brooke Bessen was looking for a meaningful way to celebrate Earth Day. She decided to donate her fee for one school visit to an environmental organization. And instead of choosing that organization herself, she let the kids at the school vote on which one would get the loot. That empowered the kids, and also launched Authors for Earth Day (A4ED), now a national coalition of children's authors and illustrators.

Since then, Brooke, myself, Bruce Hale, Debbie Dadey, Suzy Kline, Nancy Castaldo, Barbara Gowan, Marianne Berkes, Conrad Storad, and Jerry and Eileen Spinelli have raised thousands of dollars for Greenpeace, Ocean Conservancy, National Audubon Society, World Wildlife Fund, the Nature Conservancy, and other environmental groups.

We want this to get BIG, and we're hoping all of you who do school visits will join us in 2012. Here are the details:

- We each do a school visit during April and donate at least 30 percent of our fee to an environmental organization.
- We give our school a list of five organizations prior to the visit (we generate the list ourselves or A4ED makes suggestions). The students

research all five so they can make an educated choice. They vote to pick a winner.

- We get paid by the school, and we make the donation, which is tax deductible. (Some authors get local businesses to kick in the money instead of the school.)

That's pretty much it. There's no money out of our pocket. We schedule and coordinate our own visit and retain control over the content of our presentations. Last year, rather than finding a school to visit around Earth Day, I simply designated one of my April school visits to be my A4ED school, and the school loved the idea.

Brooke and A4ED make it easy for us. She e-mails reminders, voting form templates, and other resources. We simply forward the info to the school. A webpage is created for each of us with details about our books, school visit info, photos, videos, etc. There's also an A4ED blog that welcomes short essays, poems, and stories with an environmental theme (whether you do a school visit or not). It's a great way to cross-promote yourself. As a bonus, some of us have received TV, radio, and newspaper coverage.

I can recycle all my newspapers, take two-minute showers, and unplug every phone charger in the house. Will any of that really make a difference? It doesn't feel like it.

But as authors and illustrators, there's something we can do that will make a huge difference—help fund the organizations that are fighting so hard to save the planet. It doesn't cost us anything, it inspires kids, and all we have to do is what we do best.

Join us. Go to [www.authorsforearthday.org](http://www.authorsforearthday.org) or e-mail Brooke at [info@authorsforearthday.org](mailto:info@authorsforearthday.org).

## POEM

### I'm in Charge?

I have this character.  
Let's call him Joe.  
He has taken my story  
And won't let it go.

When I tell him to pray,  
He goes to a bar.  
I forbid him to stray—  
Oops, he just stole a car.

It's making me crazy,  
His idea of fun.  
I said, "Be a cowboy."  
He came back as a nun.

He knows I'm in charge,  
For I've made that quite plain.  
Did I just hear him chuckle?  
I've been under a strain.

But we reached an agreement,  
At least I think so.  
I'll lead him wherever  
He tells me to go.

—Bob Hargrove