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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ JUVENILE FICTION

A Race for Charley

Elaine Stafford
Irene Joslin, illustrator
Softcover $12.95 (24pp)
978-1-4343-3587-6

Charley is part of a loving accepting family. As a baby "…Charley did not know that he could not walk or run / To him it was enough to have his family and their love." *A Race for Charley* gives a hopeful view of a child living with a disability. The affection and acceptance he receives is important for all children whether they are disabled or not.

Charley does not find this same goodwill when he ventures outside his home but he doesn't let that hinder him. The book's first illustrations show Charley in his wheelchair interacting with his siblings and the family dog. By the story's end he is enjoying time with a group of friends.

The book's title is a little misleading because young readers may be lead to believe that the story will be about Charley competing in a particular race. But this is not the case; it is really about a race as a metaphor for life a notion that some children may not grasp:

> *It took time but people began to see / The friend they could have in Charley / To challenge them at the end of each finish line / A finish line in a race without time.*

Stafford a trial attorney by profession was inspired to write the book because of her experiences with helping a disabled child. The book's honest and positive outlook makes it ideal for children whether they have disabilities or not. The author acknowledges the challenges Charley faces in a balanced way. She does not sugarcoat nor is she overly gloomy. The story is a universal look at what it means to feel like an outsider. Charley has a disability but readers will be able to relate to him because everyone at some point has feared that they wouldn't be able to get into the game because they were somehow different.
(August 21, 2009)

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