ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

Playing by the Rules: A Story about Autism
Dena Fox Luchsinger
Julie Olson, illustrator
Woodbine House
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To autistic Josh, new people are like new shoes, “They both rub him the wrong way.” His sister, Jody, narrates when their Great Aunt Tilda comes to visit. Although frustrated by her brother’s interruptions during a game with Aunt Tilda, Jody knows that Josh has his own set of rules. Whether explaining Josh’s PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) when he wants a drink or soothing him after Aunt Tilda rearranges his toy animals, Jody maintains the balance in the new situation, and with her help, Josh and Aunt Tilda soon have a mutual respect and appreciation.

The mother of a child with Down syndrome and autism and the founder of Proyecto Down, a non-profit program serving families of children with Down syndrome in Mexico, author Dena Fox Luchsinger is also the writer of the bilingual *Sometimes Smart Is Good/A Veces es Bueno Ser Inteligente*. Illustrator Julie Olson has designed artwork for numerous picture books, children’s magazines, and even her own children’s games. Her cartoon-like illustrations, rendered in pen-and-ink and bright watercolors, are instantly appealing to young readers, yet also capture the sophisticated emotions of the day, from Josh’s apprehension to Aunt Tilda’s nervousness.

The author keeps the tone lighthearted while revealing the realities of autism and the difficulties for both the child affected and the family living with him. *Playing by the Rules* is an excellent introduction to autism for young readers not familiar with the disorder. Families and care-givers of autistic children will welcome this honest portrayal. All readers will come away with a new-found consideration for one another’s diverse “rules” in life.

Angela Leeper