

MAINE TODAY



Otto Von Schnoodle Literacy Celebration

Grace Birch, author of the children's book series, *The Adventures of Otto Von Schnoodle*, is currently in Maine for a Book Signing, with the star himself, Otto Von Schnoodle, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Family Literacy Act!

This event is OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, NO CHARGE!

Please join her and Otto, Thursday, September 15, 5-9 at the Falmouth Country Club, 1 Congressional Drive, Falmouth.

Birch, who has partnered with The Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation, visits schools, libraries and hospitals, reading to children. Their joint goal is to increase awareness of childhood Literacy.

She also runs Otto's program, "Read With Otto", Skyping with children, responding to letter requests and becoming their pen pal, all to encourage reading and vocabulary growth.

Birch grew up in Cumberland and graduated from Greely High School. She attended the University of Maine, Orono, with a focus on early childhood development. She went on to work for a major airline, as an instructor, ultimately becoming their manager of training and development.

Research shows that reading aloud is the single most important activity parents, grandparents, childcare providers, teachers and other caring adults can engage in with a child to develop critical, early language and foundational skills for learning how to read. Reading aloud also stimulates brain activity. During the first three years of life, a child's brain makes trillions of connections, the fastest it will ever grow. Unfortunately, fewer than half of children age five and under nationally are read to aloud each day.

Students who do not read proficiently by the 3rd grade are four times more likely to leave high school without a diploma. Low-literate parents often are unable to provide a stimulating learning environment for the children. This inequality in opportunity leads to an achievement gap that extends through elementary school and beyond.

Birch is passionate about Literacy and hopes she can ultimately make a difference in the discouraging statistic of 36 Million Americans unable to read.