

Body of Work Award Acceptance
Winnie Sandler Grinspoon, President, Harold Grinspoon Foundation

On behalf of the entire PJ Library team at the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, and all of our partners and supporters, I thank you for this very special honor.

Of course, remarks at an event such as this should begin with a story.

In 2005, my father-in-law, Harold Grinspoon, was at our home for Passover Seder. I had Aficomen gifts at the ready for each of our children. The gifts were children's books. The most beautiful Jewish storybooks I could find on the shelves of the Israel Bookstore. Harold watched his grandchildren's little faces as they lit up when they received their books! Books that shared Jewish stories in a beautiful way.

Being a visionary, Harold had the idea to recreate that moment he saw – again and again and again. What if that excitement of the book gift happened each month? And how might that excitement, coupled with the stories themselves, rub off on the families as they snuggled together for precious reading time? What would the Jewish community look like if a whole generation grew up reading Jewish bedtime stories?

It is one thing to have this grand vision, but to make it real you need lots of help, including funding partners, and a team of excellent professionals -- and most of all for this vision you

need BOOKS! Great books! Beautifully illustrated, engaging, lovely stories that a family will want to read again and again.

When we launched PJ Library in 2005, there were only so many Jewish children's books available in trade. For PJ Library to grow and succeed we would need lots of books – books for different age groups, covering multiple Jewish holidays and customs and practices. We also didn't want to repeat books in the lineup too often, so each and every book a family received would be new and special.

I am happy to tell you that the world of Jewish children's books looks very different today than it did back then.

Consider this. Our book selection committee counts a book to be NEW in the lineup if it is new to market or has not been used in the lineup for a full 4 years. In 2011, just 32% of PJ Library's lineup consisted of NEW books; in 2017, 97% were NEW. Another example: In 2011, PJ Library received 130 manuscripts; and in 2017, we received an incredible 1,101 manuscripts, in addition to the books we received from publishers. More authors are writing Jewish children's books today, adding new stories to our rich cannon.

It is thanks to the talent and creativity of authors around the world, as well as thanks to their agents and publishers, that we are able to source excellent content. We love creating opportunities for established authors and also developing new authors. To date, PJ Library has

distributed 509 distinct book titles, from 280 authors, many of whom are in this room today.

Let's hear it for the PJ Library authors!

Numbers are great, but what we care about most are fabulous stories and high quality illustrations. We want PJ Library books to be the best of the best. PJ Library is so proud to be distributing the work of many award winning authors. To date, the PJ Library lineup contains 61 Sydney Taylor Winner and Honor books. At least 20 of our titles are National Jewish Book Award winners and finalists. And let's not forget the 7 Caldecott Medal and Honor books that we are proud to include as ours.

Being honored among the talented authors here tonight is a special privilege for us. Your incredible work brings such joy to families, and we are happy to be able to share your work with so many. To date, PJ Library and its sister programs have distributed over 28 million Jewish children's books to families in 17 countries, and we've only just begun. Thank you again for this special recognition, and please continue your work to bring great Jewish children's literature into the world.