

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 18, 2026

CONTACT: **Jackie McFadden**
407-222-9766
jackie@jackiebookshepherd.com

I'll Be with You Wherever You Are
by Michael Finn
Wins Silver IBPA Book Award

(Herndon, Virginia – May 18, 2026) – Mascot Kids! is proud to announce that *I'll Be with You Wherever You Are* (ISBN: 979-8-89138-347-0) by Michael Finn received Silver in the 38th IBPA Book Award program's Children's Picture Book (4-7 years) category. Celebrating excellence in book editorial and design, the IBPA Book Awards are administered by the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA), the largest book publishers' association in the U.S., with more than 3,500 members. The IBPA Book Awards Program is recognized as the most prestigious book award celebrating excellence in independent book publishing since 1985.

This year, the IBPA Book Award winners were honored during a live dinner ceremony held on the evening of May 15 at the Hyatt Regency Portland at the Convention Center in Portland, Oregon. Ingram Content Group sponsored the ceremony.

Named a Silver winner in the Children's Picture Book (4-7 years) category during the ceremony, *I'll Be with You Wherever You Are* rose as one of the top picks from a pool of more than 100 entries in its category.

I'll Be with You Wherever You Are was six years in the making and is a heartfelt and lyrical illustrated story that profoundly explores one of life's most difficult questions—how love endures beyond physical presence once we die—through the tender bond between a father and a son, offering comfort, hope, and whimsy to child readers and the adult's inner child alike. The IBPA Book Award recognition affirms that *I'll Be with You Wherever You Are* succeeded powerfully in its purpose, connecting deeply with its intended audience by addressing grief, love, and everlasting connection with honesty, compassion, and emotional reassurance that these conversations are important, necessary, and not to be feared.

Michael Finn lives on a farm in Central Texas with his wife, two sons, and George the dog. He is the author of *I'll Be with You Wherever You Are* and other heart-centered stories to befriend the child within. When he is not writing, Michael gives talks on spiritual and personal growth, plays guitar, and hugs his kids as often as possible. He believes that all things are possible with love and appreciation for yourself and that the journey is more important than the destination.

An annual book award competition since 1985, the IBPA Book Award recognizes excellence in independent book publishing across 59 categories. This year's competition garnered more than 1,900 entries. IBPA received assistance in administering the program from 177 book publishing professionals, including librarians, bookstore owners, reviewers, designers, publicity managers, and editors.

“Since the IBPA book award's founding in 1985, many other award programs have come and gone,” said IBPA chief operations officer Terry Nathan, “but we are proud to report that our awards program continues to do what it did when we started, and that is to honor the best in independent book publishing while helping IBPA members improve their publishing programs.”

For more information or to request a review copy of *I'll Be with You Wherever You Are*, contact Jackie McFadden at jackie@jackiebookshepherd.com.

For a complete listing of this year's IBPA Book Award winners, visit ibpabookaward.org.

###

About Mascot Kids!

Amplify Publishing Group is a leading hybrid publisher that is passionate about ideas and voices that need to be heard. APG publishes across a wide variety of genres and is the culmination of 20 years of experience acquiring, producing, marketing, and distributing books. It is home to a number of distinct imprints, including Mascot Kids!.

About the IBPA Book Award (formerly the IBPA Benjamin Franklin Award™)

The IBPA Book Award, formerly known as the IBPA Benjamin Franklin Award, includes 59 categories recognizing excellence in book editorial and design. It is regarded as one of the highest national honors for independent publishers. The awards are unique in that the verbatim judging forms are returned to all participating publishers, providing entrants with direct feedback on each submission. The awards are administered by the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA), with help from more than 170 volunteer book publishing professionals, including librarians, bookstore owners, reviewers, designers, publicity managers, and editors. Visit ibpabookaward.org.

About the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA)

Founded in 1983 to support independent publishers nationwide, the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA) leads and serves the independent publishing community through advocacy, education, and tools for success. With more than 3,500 members, IBPA is the largest publishing association in the U.S. Its vision is a world where every independent publisher has the access, knowledge, and tools needed to professionally engage in all aspects of an inclusive publishing industry. For more information, visit www.ibpa-online.org.

####