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New Sylvan Dell release is a double award-winner Children can master analogous thinking with Mariconda's *Sort It Out!*

MT. PLEASANT, SC (October 31, 2008) – Sylvan Dell Publishing released Barbara Mariconda's children's picture book *Sort It Out!* in July of 2008. Soon, event invitations started pouring in for October and November. Mariconda's company, Empowering Writers, started to take off. Then, came the big surprise—two national awards within the span of a week: a Moonbeam Gold Medal for Reading Skills/Literacy and a USA Book News National Best Book Finalist Medal for Children's Educational.

"As a writer, a lot of what you do is solitary. Many days it's you and your computer," said Mariconda upon receiving the good news. "Then, when you receive an award you realize - WOW - people out there are not only reading my work, but they're *liking* it! It's a wonderful feeling!"

The Moonbeam awards are held annually and are sponsored by the Independent Publisher Online Magazine. This year, *Sort It Out!* won the gold medal among 1,085 other entries. The Best Book Awards are sponsored by USABookNews.com, the premiere online magazine and review website for mainstream and independent publishing houses. Now in its fifth year, awards were given out in 140 different categories.

Sort It Out! is the story of Packy the Packrat, illustrated by Sherry Rogers. It's time that Packy sorts through his ever-growing collection of trinkets and puts them away. Told in rhyme, the text leads the reader to participate in the sorting process by categorizing Packy's piles of things according to like characteristics and attributes. Children will relate to the idea of having a collection of favorite objects and the satisfaction that comes from examining and admiring these collectibles. In the supplemental activity section at the back of the book, the reader can explore even more attributes and characteristics of objects, including color, size, texture, shape, and material. Mariconda is quite the collector, too, and she credits her vast collections of sea glass, paperweights, and Venetian masks as inspiration for writing her new picture book.

While teaching second grade in Fairfield, Connecticut, Mariconda developed a successful writing program and founded an educational seminar/consulting firm called Empowering Writers, LLC (<http://www.empoweringwriters.com>). She and a fellow teacher now train thousands of educators a year. *Sort it Out!*, though primarily a math-themed picture book, doesn't fall far from Mariconda's work with Empowering Writers. The story teaches analogous thinking—a skill she says is as important in writing as in math and science.

"In order to write in an organized fashion, to group like details with broader main ideas, to recognize the ways in which main ideas in a piece of writing may overlap and therefore encourage redundancy—all of this is related to the writer's ability to think critically in this way," said Mariconda.

Illustrator Sherry Rogers spent twelve years as a corporate graphic designer and artist before "leaving it all behind" for the freelance world. In addition to illustrating *Sort It Out!*, Sherry has also illustrated *Paws, Claws, Hands, and Feet*

(Spring 2009), *Moose and Magpie* (Fall 2009), *Kersplatypus*, *Burro's Tortillas*, and *If You Were a Parrot* for Sylvan Dell and *Counting Little Geckos*. For more information about Sherry and her illustrations, visit <http://www.sherry-rogers.com/>.

For more information about *Sort It Out!* or Sylvan Dell Publishing in general, visit the Sylvan Dell Publishing website, <http://www.SylvanDellPublishing.com>. For additional inquiries, contact Sara Dobie, Public Relations, at 877-958-2600 or SaraDobie@SylvanDellPublishing.com.

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About Sylvan Dell Publishing

Sylvan Dell picture books with science, math and nature themes excite children's imaginations through fun stories, vibrant artwork and a 3-5 page "For Creative Minds" educational section in the back of each book. But that is just the start...what really makes the books unique, is their tremendous amount of free, online educational material available for cross-curricular learning, including: 30-80 page Teaching Activities, Interactive Reading and Math Quizzes, and much more. They have 57 authors and illustrators on the Sylvan Dell team and their 35 titles have been honored as nominees, finalists, or winners of more than 50 book awards. Sylvan Dell eBooks, available in English and Spanish, are wonderful for use with in-classroom projection or interactive whiteboards (Smartboards) and are ideal for Spanish language classes and ESL students at all grade levels.

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