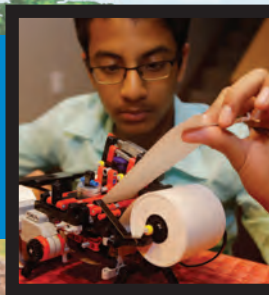


Real Kids



Real Stories

Real Character



Choices That Matter Around the World

Garth Sundem

free spirit
PUBLISHING®

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
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Chapter 1: Courage

Zach Veach: The Courage to Be Different (Ohio)	6
---	---

Teenage racecar driver Zach Veach puts up with kids who bully at school, and older drivers who think he's too young to race, to make it on the IndyCar circuit.

Eunice Muba: To Educate a Girl Is to Educate a Nation (Democratic Republic of the Congo)	11
---	----

Young reporter Eunice Muba spoke out against teenage marriage and a system in which only one out of four girls goes to school.

Winter Vinecki: Born to Run, Learning to Fly (Antarctica) . . .	15
--	----

When Winter Vinecki was 10 years old, her dad died of prostate cancer. Now, she is the youngest person to run marathons on all seven continents, raising money for cancer research along the way.

Arti Verma: "Caste"-ing Off (India)	19
--	----

In a rural Indian village, Arti could have sat back and enjoyed being the daughter of the village leader. Instead, she campaigned against the discrimination of India's caste system.

Tom Schaar: Fully Committed (California)	24
---	----

Do you think it takes courage to launch 20 feet off the top of a Mega Ramp and spin in the air three full times? Ask 12-year-old Tom Schaar, the first person to land a 1080 on a skateboard.

Michael Bowron: How to Hotwire a Truck Radio (Australia) 31

When Michael's dad flipped their farm truck on a remote road, it took courage and a little ingenuity to call for help.

Chapter 2: Creativity 36

Jasuel Rivera: Clean Up That Mess!
(Dominican Republic) 38

The floor of 13-year-old Jasuel Rivera's home was covered in cardboard and glue. But for Jasuel, it wasn't trash. He needed those supplies for his inventions.

Calista Frederick-Jaskiewicz: Origami Salami
(Pennsylvania) 42

What does folding a paper crane have to do with math and science? Both follow precise steps toward an elegant finish . . . at least to Calista, who started her club Origami Salami to inspire kids to study science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics.

Shubham Banerjee: Creativity Is Inside You (California) . . . 46

This Silicon Valley seventh grader used a LEGO Mindstorms kit to build a braille printer that helps blind people read the Internet. How? By listening to the creativity inside himself.

Sam and Ben Tollison: A Monster to Love (Colorado) 51

When you buy one of these ugly-cute dolls, the boys design, sew, and deliver another one to a children's charity. Sometimes everyone needs a monster to love.

Amanda LaMunyon: Mistakes Are Part of the Painting (Oklahoma) 55

When Amanda was eight, she was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. When she was 12, she spoke to the United Nations about what it feels like to hold a paintbrush.

Chapter 3: Kindness 60

Alex McKelvey: 600 Acts of Kindness (Washington) 62

In memory of her grandmother who died just before her 60th birthday, six-year-old Alex decided to perform 600 acts of kindness.

Kevin Curwick: @OsseoNiceThings (Minnesota) 66

To combat cyberbullying at his high school, Kevin started a Twitter account to point out the good things he saw in people around him. Soon the cyberbullying stopped and @OsseoNiceThings took over the school.

Connor Long: Nice Guys Finish Last (Tennessee) 71

Connor's little brother, Cayden, had cerebral palsy and couldn't enjoy running, biking, and swimming like other kids. That is, until Connor started towing, pulling, and pushing his little brother in triathlons.

Hashmat Suddat: People Don't Know and I Don't Blame Them (Virginia) 75

After Hashmat's parents were killed for opposing terrorists in Afghanistan, he and his siblings fled to the United States . . . arriving just after the September 11 attacks. When classmates called him racist names, Hashmat met their insults with kindness.

Justice Miller: Turning Down Fame (Michigan) 80

Justice was the star wide receiver of his middle school football team. When the team engineered a way for their learning disabled team manager to score a touchdown, they all had the opportunity to be famous. Here's what Justice did instead.

Chapter 4: Persistence and Grit 84

Robert Nay: Bubble Ball (Utah) 86

It took 14-year-old Robert hundreds of hours at the public library to learn to design the game app Bubble Ball. Now, it's been downloaded over 9 million times.

Christopher Cruz: Drab to Fab (New York) 89

Is your lunchroom a little bit gray, a little bit dark . . . a little bit drab? It sure was at Brooklyn's PS 123. Christopher decided to do something about it.

Danny DiPietro: A Persistent Hunch (Michigan) 93

Was that a dog in an open garage on a freezing Michigan night? The back of 10-year-old Danny DiPietro's mind told him it was something more, and he didn't give up until his mom went to check it out.

Mikaela Shiffrin: Practice Makes Perfect
(New Hampshire) 97

What do you get when you spend thousands of hours taking hundreds of runs on a small, icy ski hill in New Hampshire? Perfect technique, that's what. Oh, and some Olympic medals.

Chapter 5: Resilience 102

Samantha Garvey: Big Mussels of Science (New York) . . . 104

There's a difference between *muscles* and *mussels*. Here's how Samantha used her "mussels" to go from a homeless shelter to the State of the Union Address.

Tatyana McFadden: Ya Sama! (Maryland) 109

In Russian, *ya sama* means "I can do it myself!" That's what Tatyana has been saying since she was a disabled child in a Russian orphanage. Maybe it was independence that helped this Paralympian win on the track and in the courtroom.

Amit Dodani: My Name, My Story (California) 113

A kid with a severe speech impediment on the debate team? Some people might think those two don't go together. Here's how Amit Dodani proved them wrong.

James Williams: Victor Not Victim (South Carolina) 119

No one should have to live the childhood of James Williams, who was abused in foster homes. But his story is also one of hope and of overcoming a terrible past.

Benni Cinkle: That Girl in Pink (California) 123

What do you do when your most embarrassing moment goes viral and is seen by 70 million people? If you're Benni Cinkle, you bounce back with honesty, humility, and humor.

Diego Frazão Torquato: Music from the Heart (Brazil) . . . 126

Growing up in a Brazilian *favela* wasn't easy, but through his music, Diego became a symbol of joy and transformation for his country.

Chapter 6: Responsibility 132

William Kamkwamba: Tower of Power (Malawi) 134

Who makes sure your electricity stays on? In the African country of Malawi, 13-year-old William decided he would do it himself.

Laura Dekker: Around the World in 519 Days (The Netherlands) 139

Anchors away! Hoist the storm jib! Wait, take down the storm jib! Oh no, it's jammed! On her solo sail around the world, Laura had to save herself.

Diane Tran: Jailed for Responsibility (Texas) 144

Seventeen-year-old Diane Tran was an honors student working two after-school jobs to support her brother and sister. This is why she went to jail.

Sarbast Ali: A School of One (Iraq) 148

Sarbast was in a wheelchair and couldn't get to school over the rough ground in the Domiz refugee camp in Northern Iraq. That's why Sarbast took his education into his own hands.

A Note from the Author 152

Index 154

About the Author 158



Chapter 1

Courage

Courage is saving a kitten that's stuck in a tall tree. But it's also so much more. Courage is the willingness to do something difficult. Maybe it takes two seconds, like telling a friend to stop bullying. Or maybe courage happens over years and years, like living a positive life with a challenging health condition. It can be something you do with your body, like saving the kitten. Or it can be something you do with your heart and your mind, like choosing to speak out against injustice. It can also take courage to avoid something, like following friends or family members into activities you know would be bad for you.

No matter what form it takes, courage is the force that changes the natural direction of things. If you don't show courage, things just . . . continue. The kitten remains in danger, injustice goes on and on, or you end up doing what's easy instead of what's right.

Courage isn't easy. But it's what makes impossible things possible. What do you think is possible? Why not find out?



The Courage to Be Different

Zach Veach

When Zach Veach was four years old, he told his parents he wanted to be a professional racecar driver. It made sense: Zach grew up watching his dad, Roger, drive in truck and tractor pull competitions. But his family knew how much work it takes to become a pro driver and only wanted Zach to go down that long road if it was what he really, really wanted. When other kids in his small hometown of Stockdale, Ohio, started racing go-karts, the first step on the long path to driving professionally, Zach's parents encouraged him to wait.

Then when Zach was 11, his dad won the national truck and tractor pull championship in Macon, Missouri.

"Driving home from the championship, we saw a little go-kart track off the highway," Zach says. They pulled over, and there on the side of the road, Zach got

his first taste behind the wheel. “I don’t know why, but that day my dad decided to sell his trucks and tractors, give it all up, and help me reach my dream.”

Zach’s dad bought him a go-kart, and Zach started going to the local track after school and on weekends, running endless laps alone late into the evenings to get a feel for what a kart could and couldn’t do. People have called Zach a “natural.” But this “natural” talent actually came from sacrificing every evening and weekend to get thousands of hours of practice.

With practice, Zach started to get fast.

Really fast.

So fast that his lap times started to turn heads. One of those heads was famous racecar driver Michael Andretti, who owned an IndyCar team. After watching 14-year-old Zach drive, Andretti invited him to try out for his USF2000 team, which is kind of like what college baseball is to the minors. It was Zach’s first taste of professional racing, and he ate it up, finishing fifth in points despite starting after the first two races of the season had already been run. In 2010, Zach was a semi-finalist for *Sports Illustrated Kids SportsKid* of the Year.

But Zach’s skills on the racetrack didn’t matter back at his middle school in Stockdale. Because Zach was small, he was picked on at school. Once, a kid pushed his head down onto a desk so hard that Zach

FAST FACTS

IndyCar is a professional auto-racing organization.

chipped a tooth. Another time, Zach won a weekend race in Indiana and proudly wore the winner's cap to school on Monday. At lunch, a kid grabbed the hat, poured milk on it, and threw it in a trashcan. Zach took it in stride. When winners of the Indianapolis 500 cross the finish line, they're handed a bottle of milk and they pour it over themselves. Zach retrieved his hat and imagined he had just won the famous race.

When Zach was 15, he graduated to the Indy Light circuit—like minor league baseball and just one step away from the major leagues of IndyCar itself. In Indy Light, Zach would be driving at about 200 miles per hour, and he was still too young to get a driver's license!

It was pretty obvious some of the older drivers didn't think Zach belonged. He'd be on the inside of a turn and an experienced driver would push him into the grass. It felt like having his face shoved into a desk by a kid at school or having his hat thrown in the trashcan all over again. Maybe at school he was too small to be a match for the kids who bullied him, but behind the wheel, the size of his body didn't matter—it was his courage that counted. For Zach, courage was all about finding a peaceful mind.

"Driving is one of the most peaceful places on earth," he says. "You have to get into your mindset. Even when people are trying to shove you around, you have to stay cool and confident so you don't make mistakes."

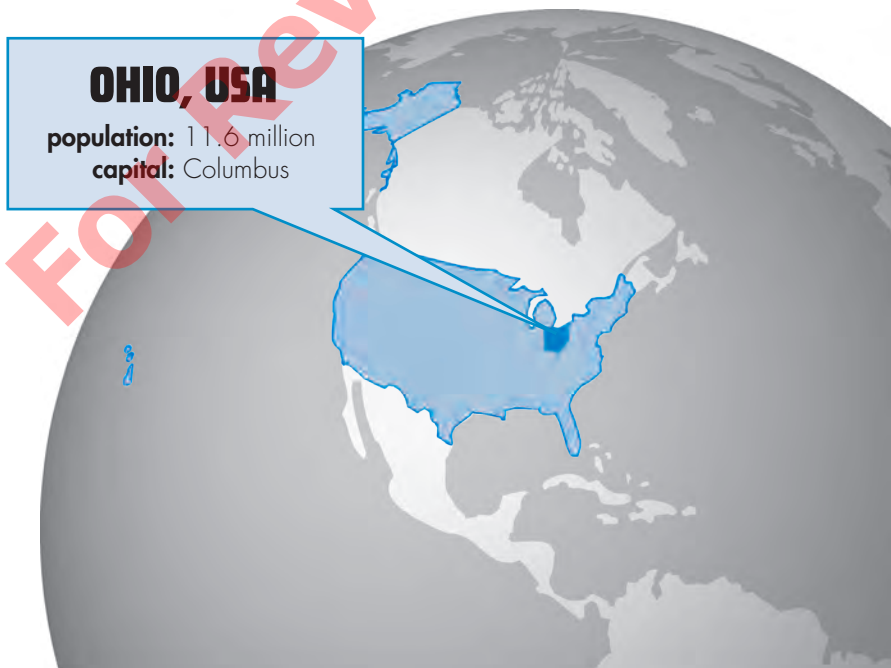
On the track, Zach let his driving do the talking. His first year in Indy Light, he took third in a race at the Milwaukee Mile and won a race at Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, California, to finish the season in seventh place overall. In 2014, Zach's second Indy Lights season, he won three races and stood on the podium nine times to finish third overall.

"Ever since I was young, I was that kid climbing trees, wanting to know how high I could get. I've always been interested in finding my limits, pushing myself to see how far I could take myself," Zach says. For Zach, courage has always meant more than going 250 miles per hour while inches away from other cars going just as fast. It's been the courage to be different, the courage to find his limits.

OHIO, USA

population: 11.6 million

capital: Columbus



Now at age 21, Zach is trying to race in the big leagues: the IndyCar circuit. By the time you're reading this book, all it will take is a quick Google search to see if he made it. Whether the answer is yes or no, you can bet that Zach had the courage to *try*.

