

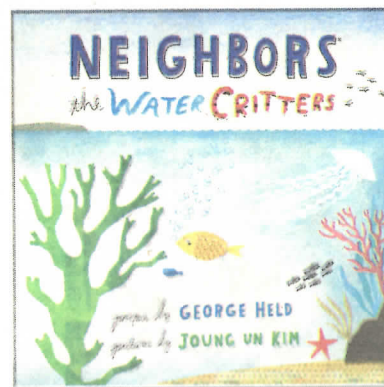
# A New, Beautiful Beach Read for Kids

BY LEE MEYER

The South Fork Natural History Museum in Bridgehampton will host a launch party for *Neighbors: The Water Critters* on Saturday, August 15 at 4 p.m. Written by Sag Harbor's George Held and illustrated by Joung Un Kim, *Neighbors* is a lovely collection of poetry about sea creatures big and small, how they survive and why they're important to the world. With often poignant poems by Held complemented by Kim's Eric Carle-like collage, *Neighbors* is a great book for parents to read with children who are interested in life under the sea.

*Neighbors* features poetry about dolphins, seals, beavers, snapping turtles, manatees, bivalves, polar bears, sea otters, sea horses, tiger salamanders, sharks, minnows and whales. Held starts things off light with a breezy first poem about dolphins, and

how "she smiles as she wiles away the miles." Kim's cheerful collage illustrates a happy dolphin leaping out of the water and enjoying life. Each of the poems provides educational information about the animals, and many mention the East End. "The harbors seal hauls up on the rocks in Sag Harbor," Held writes of the seal, before explaining how seals take care of their young. Occasionally, the language might be a little too sophisticated for young kids—"like William Astor, whose name lives on in Astoria and rhymes with Castor, the genus of beaver..." writes Held of beavers—but it also gives opportunity for discussion between parents



The cover by Joung Un Kim

and kids. Likewise, numerous mentions of New York and the East End are sure to please parents and older readers.

Held takes the opportunity to impress upon the readers the importance of cherishing each and every animal. One of the more powerful poems features the polar bear, which urges kids to "go visit Polar Bear in the zoo; she might be the last of her species." Kim echoes the statement with a faded collage of Arctic ice, only showing the bear in the distance. Held cleverly takes kids' expectations of

what certain words represent in his sea horse poem, and wryly suggests kids don't think about sharks before bedtime, never forgetting to have fun with each animal and poem. Each poem is written in a different style; some rhyme, some are more prose, in different lengths. The final poem, about the whale, is perhaps the longest and most inspired and clever, with lines like "bigger than Argentinosaurus, tongue heavy as an elephant, heart large as a Prius." Kim's two-page-long whale is shown swimming by a tiny little dog on a tugboat, a playful and adorable final image. And at the end of the book, there's a "Do You Know" page with questions about the animals the reader has just learned about.

This is the third "Neighbors" collaboration between Held and Kim following *Neighbors: The Yard Critters* and *Neighbors: The Yard Critters Too*. At the launch party, kids will be encouraged to perform the animal poems as the collage illustrations are projected. The whale, Sag Harbor's symbol, and the Tiger Salamander, a local animal associated with the museum, will be highlighted. Held will be on-hand to sign the book, and kids will be able to get temporary sea otter tattoos. With lovely poetry and charming imagery, *Neighbors: The Water Critters* is a gift. 🐬

*Neighbors: The Water Critters* is available at the South Fork Natural History Museum, Canio's, Harbor Books and BookHampton. The South Fork Natural History Museum is located at 377 Bridgehampton/Sag Harbor Turnpike, Bridgehampton. Admission to the launch event is free. Refreshments will be served. For more information, visit to [sofo.org](http://sofo.org).