



Author/Illustrator Devon Kondaki

By Megan Leahy

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Picture this: your child, at the ripe old age of twelve, tells you they want to be an artist. They have big dreams and no matter what anyone thinks they are going to pursue them. They love music and some day they are going to be a star. They are going to follow in the footsteps of their idols; Michael Jackson, Prince, Roger Troutman, 2Pac, Roger Waters...It's going to happen.

That is exactly what Devon Kondaki told his father twelve years ago. And he was serious. He was a jazz musician and that was just the path he was going to follow. He knew exactly what he had to do and he started right way. Even at this age he knew that he needed to develop his passion while he was young enough to focus solely on his art while his parents were able to provide the necessities of life.

Who does that these days?!

Active in lacrosse, football, Boy Scouts, and music Devon had a strong foundation that taught him adventure, friendship, knowledge, and values. But one day, at age 17, he doodled a little creature out of sheer boredom and low and behold, Winzlow was born. From that moment on Devon knew that his future was going to be in children's books.

Devon grew up in Southern Florida but wanted something new so he came to Indiana and attended Hanover College where he learned more about developing his business and giving his character(s) a purpose. This also gave him a platform to reach

out and connect with others who could help him. He worked hard every day, eventually developing over 200 characters for this program. Not all of them made the cut but Devon does have 21 books in mind for WinzlowNation. Like most children's book authors, the books in this series are based on Devon's life.

What/Who is Winzlow, you ask?

A fuzzy little gnome, Winzlow is the President of WinzlowNation; a whole new world that you can find on the interactive WinzlowNation.com website. Devon says that he wants to give our children a new way to learn and discover the way the United States government, which this program is based on, works. There is a map in both the book and on the site where kids can explore and unlock WinzlowNation. The website even has a virtual passport where you can get stamps after you've visited each country (sound familiar?). Winzlow even has an app.

What makes Winzlow and his friends so different from other children's series is quite simple. Kids today are not the same as children ten, twenty years ago. While they all learn differently, there are four things that Devon feels they should all understand - adventure, friendship, knowledge, and values; the same principles he grew up with. Through music (each book has a song), poems (found on the website), and language everyone can understand Devon hopes Winzlow can expand our children's minds and lead them on an adventure.

-Megan Leahy

A 30-something stay-at-home-mom of two, Megan Leahy is an Indy transplant who doesn't like to stay at home. Originally from central Illinois, you can find her anywhere from the public library returning an overdue book or Target buying more than she went in for to taking her husband & kiddos out on the town or spending time with her friends at a local hot spot.