

Cool down, keep chill with ‘The Sea in Winter’

Last week, in a house with no air conditioning on a very hot day, here was my approach for staying cool. First, I poured a glass of lemonade with ice cubes, then I settled down with a story that took place during a chilly season.

The book was author Christine Day’s second work of middle grade fiction, titled “The Sea in Winter.” Day is enrolled in the Upper Skagit Tribe, and this book is published by Heartdrum, a HarperCollins imprint that publishes Indigenous-centered stories for youth, written by Indigenous authors.

The central figure in this tale is Maisie Cannon, a Seattle middle school student and a promising ballet dancer. Maisie’s having a terrible year, suffering a trajectory-changing injury early in the school year. Months later, she’s still recuperating and unable to get back to dance class. Meanwhile, all of her best friends, also dancers, are auditioning for exciting summer dance camps around the country.

Maisie’s trying not to be envious of her friends, but it’s hard. There’s nothing she wants more than to be back among them,

pursuing her own ballet ambitions. Little else matters to her. She has no interest in her schoolwork. She’s become moody at home and irritable with her younger brother.

But with a school break coming up, her family plans a trip to Washington’s Olympic Peninsula, hoping that a change of activity will help Maisie’s attitude improve.

Maisie’s mom is Makah and her stepdad is enrolled in the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. They want to take their kids to some of the places that were important to them when they were growing up. The plan is to go clamming and even do some hiking. Maisie’s doctor gave permission for her to undertake these activities, if she moves about with care. (But seriously: hiking on beaches, muddy trails and slick boardwalks in the middle of winter? Did her parents really think that one through, given her condition?)

This story deals with the importance of developing resilience in the face of disappointment and of practicing patience in grappling with limitations. It also shares Maisie’s gradual recognition that turning a cold shoul-

der to gestures of support from family, friends and teachers is self-defeating.

Told from Maisie’s point of view, the story takes its time to develop. Early chapters are filled with extensive descriptions of scene. We learn in detail about a line of idling buses waiting for students at the end of Maisie’s school day, a rehabilitation clinic waiting room and a motel room in Port Angeles.

This stylistic choice feels overdone, but given the story’s point of view, perhaps it makes sense.

While this story may have special relevance for Indigenous youth, it should appeal to middle graders overall. Family and community connection, combined with Maisie’s evolving sense of possibility, community and learning to keep chill are valuable messages for adolescent readers.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at barbalmcm@gmail.com.

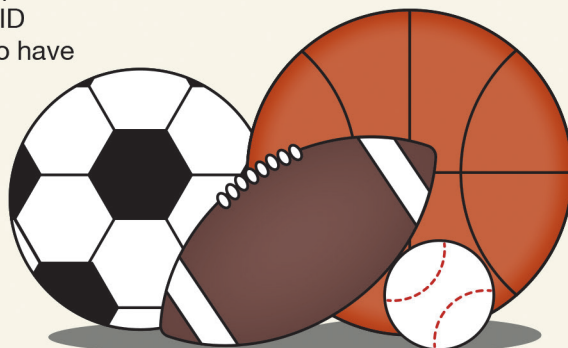
WALK-IN SPORTS PHYSICALS

\$25

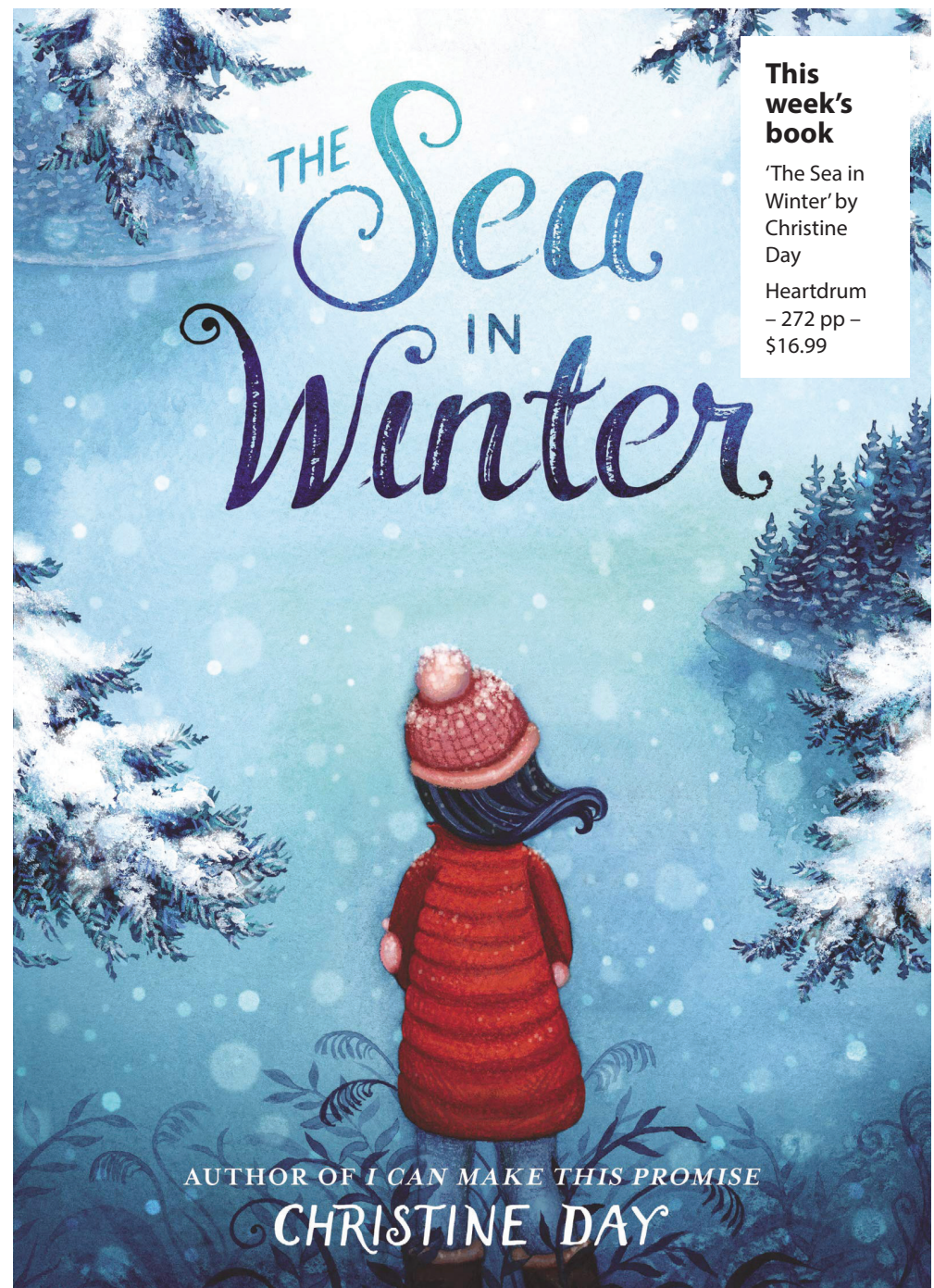
Thursday, August 4 & Friday, August 5

9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (closed 12-1 p.m. for lunch) | Astor Elementary School

Appointments are first come, first served. The Clatsop County Health Department will also be there offering COVID vaccinations for any youth who have not yet been vaccinated.




COLUMBIA
MEMORIAL
HOSPITAL



This week's book

'The Sea in Winter' by Christine Day

Heartdrum
– 272 pp –
\$16.99