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Bend father pens 'Empty,' a children's book about grief

BY DAVID JASPER • The Bulletin

Inspiration struck Richard Potvin after midnight in August 2018. "I just woke up and went, 'There's a story I need to write down,'" he said. "Sometimes, you know, if you go back to bed, you never get them back." Rather than let his idea go unrealized, Potvin, now 62, got up at 1 a.m. and sat down to write. In just the one session, he penned "Empty," a self-published children's book in which a young girl comes to terms with the death of her neighbor, "Mr. Wick."

It debuted in April, and Potvin believes it's timely given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The following morning, he said, "My wife said, 'You got out of bed last night. What did you do?' I said, 'I wrote a book,'" Potvin recalled. Note that he does not say "draft."

"I don't think I changed any of the words. I mean, it was just there," he said.

The simple, straightforward tale begins, "Mr. Wick was my friend. He lived next door to me, my sister and my mom."

The longest part of the project was finding an artist to illustrate "Empty."

"I had a few false starts with artists," Potvin said. He eventually chose was Stephanie Drake, a children's book designer in Cambridgeshire, England.

"I just liked the muted tones," he said of Drake's work. "We collaborated well. She understood what I was looking for. She sort of caught my tone."

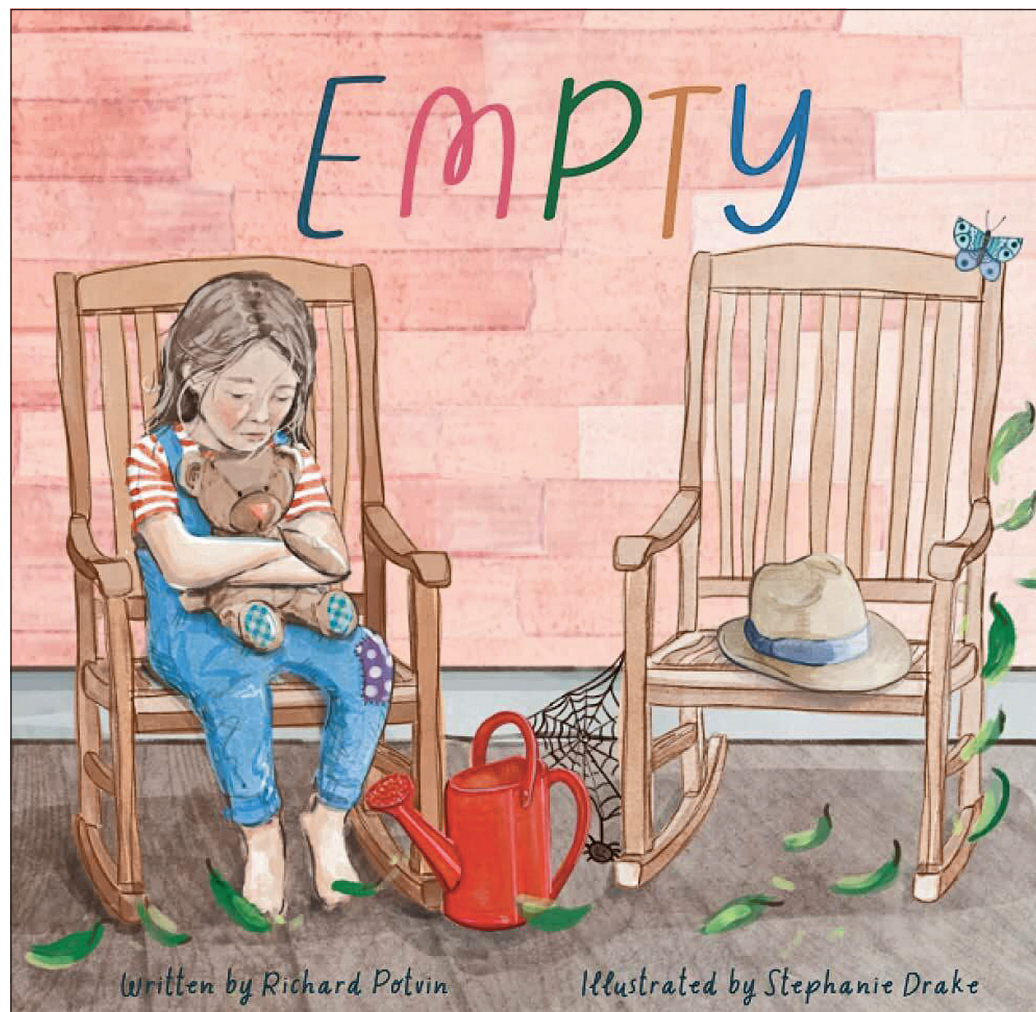
When asked if he often gets up and writes in the middle of the night, he laughed and said, "I am a bit of a strange character."

Richard Potvin, author

The rocking chairs seen on the book's cover are depictions of chairs from the barn Potvin's former home in Akron, New York, near Buffalo, where he and his wife lived before moving to Bend last year.

"The cat on the fence was our neighbors' cat. And they lived next door to us, and did have chickens," he said, referring to scenes from the book. "The little girl, when we

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Written by Richard Potvin

Illustrated by Stephanie Drake

Submitted photo

Stephanie Drake, a children's book designer in Cambridgeshire, England, illustrated Richard Potvin's book.