Based on a real-life partnership, this heartening story of the love and teamwork between a girl and her Service Dog will illuminate and inspire.

Rescue thought he’d grow up to be a Seeing Eye dog—it’s the family business, after all. When he gets the news that he’s better suited to being a Service Dog, he’s worried that he’s not up to the task. Then he meets Jessica, a girl whose life is turning out differently than she’d imagined it, too. Now Jessica needs Rescue by her side to help her accomplish everyday tasks. And it turns out that Rescue can help Jessica see after all: a way forward, together, one step at a time.

In Rescue and Jessica: A Life-Changing Friendship, readers will follow Jessica as she adjusts to life with prosthetics, wheelchairs, and crutches. Co-author Jessica Kensky, a double amputee and survivor of the Boston Marathon bombing, says, “Rescue brings so much joy and support to our lives. My husband, Patrick, and I wanted to write Rescue’s story to share with children the love we have for our own companion, to celebrate the extraordinary and varied abilities of Service Dogs, and to give insight into what it means to live with a disability. We can show them how dogs can play a special role in helping their disabled owners live full, happy lives.”

Candlewick Press senior editor Katie Cunningham says, “We hope this book will build empathy in young readers and demystify what it means to live with a disability, like what a limb might look like under a prosthetic, or how a variety of adaptive equipment could be used, or exactly what a service animal does. But my most fervent hope is that this story will be a mirror. I want a child who sees her experience of doing things differently reflected in this book to know that we, as a world, see her.”

The book is scheduled to release in April 2018, just ahead of the fifth anniversary of the Boston Marathon bombing. The authors and illustrator, with a big assist from Rescue, are planning national publicity, touring, and special events to raise awareness for the important roles and impact of assistance dogs to mark its publication.

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JESSICA KENSKY and PATRICK DOWNES were married in 2012 and were injured during the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013. Rescue joined them several months later. Their story has been featured by many national media outlets as well as in feature films and documentaries, and their inspiring efforts to educate the public by sharing their personal stories of healing have touched millions of people around the world. About Rescue and Jessica: A Life-Changing Friendship, their first picture book, they say, “We hope this story inspires you to celebrate others the way we have been celebrated. Making this book has been therapeutic, and we hope you enjoy the story as much as we enjoyed telling it.” They live in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
**Why was the process of writing and developing this picture book a therapeutic process for you both?**

**JESSICA:** Even in the very early stages, just brainstorming the possibility of a children's book starring Rescue was fun, entertaining, and playful. We were having dinner with our dear friend and soon-to-be book agent, Clelia Gore. Clelia could not believe that Rescue quietly slept in a tiny little ball at my feet on the plane ride all the way from Boston to Seattle (we flew to Seattle for a military-grade brace that was my last hope at saving my right leg). Clelia and her fiancé were amazed at how well behaved Rescue was under the small bistro table. “He is just amazing!” she exclaimed. “You should really write a book about him.” And truly, ever since that first conversation in Seattle, this project has consistently brought us laughter and joy. If it didn’t bring us such pleasure and if the message weren’t so meaningful to us both, I don’t know if we would have actually completed the book. I think it would have fallen through the cracks during what ended up being over four years of consistent surgeries and setbacks. Not to mention the amputation of my right, remaining leg.

**PATRICK:** At the time of the bombing, I was finishing my doctorate in clinical psychology with a specialty in working with children. All of my work and education since college has been centered around children and adolescents, and I love how they challenge me to think, play, and speak. I cherish the opportunity to help children understand the world in ways that are honest and yet accessible to their stage of development. When we got hurt my plans were derailed, and I sorely missed those therapeutic interactions. When we started to go out in public, we caught the eyes of a lot of people, but children’s fascination was pure curiosity and desire to understand. They wanted to know about our prosthetic legs, our scars, and, of course, Rescue. Again I had the opportunity to use my training, and it reawakened my passion for the emotional development and well-being of children. I loved answering their honest and thought-provoking questions, the challenge of demystifying a novel and mature topic. To think that I could help them better understand people with disabilities and Service Dogs, and even do it with a smile and a laugh, meant the world to me and reminded me that I still had a gift to share with children, despite all that had been taken from me, from us.

The last four and a half years have been filled with anguish and anxiety for both of us, but mostly for Jess. There have been times when Jess has been so devoid of hope and happiness that I wondered if they would ever come back. But working on this book has always pulled her out of the darkness and given her something to smile about and awakened her spirit and creativity. Just as Rescue has always lifted her spirits, working on his book has done the same. Even an hour of brainstorming lifts the cloud that has hung over us. We hope that it will do the same for all those who read it. Life has many stinging realities, and being sad is a natural and healthy reaction. But then it is also important to be reminded of the love and companionship that still surrounds you. In Jessica’s case it is a beautiful black lab, but all of us have or can find that companion who is willing to walk (or roll) a difficult path with you. And that makes even the smallest successes that much sweeter.
You have said that you think this book will be unexpected, in terms of the story you decided to share about your recovery. Why?

J&P: Our culture has certain ways that we typically address these unexplainable, heinous acts to children—we skim over them. We try to shield children from the horror and the truth. Parents have told their children that “those people” (referring to us) were hurt in an accident or they were born different; both obviously not true in our case. Perhaps we, as a society, assume the truth is too scary for children because in fact it is too scary for most adults. But without all the information, children fill in the gaps, and often that can be more destructive than the truth. Of course you have to use language and symbols that meet them where they are in life, but once you do kids are capable of tremendous compassion, nuance, and hope in the face of adversity and fear. We hope to prove that with this story by inviting readers to feel the pain, sorrow, and anxiety that Jessica and Rescue feel, but also to witness how they are able to sit with uncertainty and yet achieve so much as a team. While their emotional intelligence is still evolving, children possess the ability to grow and understand. By sharing our story, we are letting children know that we trust them to take this journey with Jessica and Rescue. Hopefully by doing so they add new skills and understanding to their repertoire.

With adult audiences, we often feel pressure to share the vivid and startling details of how we were attacked, but this has been widely covered and only perpetuates the story of hate. Instead, in this book, we have decided to focus on the rich themes that we have encountered along this journey because we realize that they are not unique to us; they are universal in all tragedy and challenge. We have felt it important to talk about the intimacies of the struggle, sadness, the search for hope, and the joy found in being part of a loving team. There has also been a hope that our recovery would be on a positive and linear trajectory, meaning that setbacks wouldn’t exist or they would be easily surmountable. Of course this hasn’t been the case. Jessica’s recovery, and her companionship with Rescue, has taken constant dedication and practice. Children know what this dedication and practice is like. They’re constantly practicing in all facets of their lives, and they are so transparent about the ways in which they struggle and succeed. We hope that they can see themselves in this story and recommit to whatever it is that they are working to better in themselves. We hope that people will appreciate the way we use our story to highlight these themes and translate them into terms that are accessible to children.

How do you think this book could help children or adults as a discussion starter about life with disabilities?

J: I think this book opens up the possibility to many important conversations—particularly a discussion about disabilities and people that look and get around the world differently. In this book, Jessica uses a number of different pieces of durable medical equipment (DME): wheelchair, crutches, walker, and prosthetics. The illustrations demonstrate her learning wheelchair transfers, learning to walk and balance in parallel bars, opening a door and carrying items in a wheelchair, etc. Each illustration is an opportunity to stare, ask questions, and learn.

P: Oftentimes people feel the need to shield children from people who look different. They worry that they might say the wrong thing or be scared of what they discover. We have found the complete opposite. Children whose parents let them approach us and ask questions about Rescue or our prosthetics seem to be craving knowledge. They know that something is different, and instead of being repelled by it they are drawn toward it. That should tell adults something. These are children who are too young to develop prejudices of their own and are only capable of adopting those that adults
provide them. When a child approaches to inquire about our prosthetics, it is usually out of concern that we are in pain. They know what physical pain is like and can imagine the pain we went through to have our human legs removed. When they’re invited to touch, hold, or investigate our prosthetics, a smile spreads across their face. They crave knowledge and are so proud of themselves when they get it.

At the conclusion of our interaction, they are left holding the knowledge that there was a time when we were in pain, that sometimes it returns and sometimes we can be happy and healthy. They learn that sometimes our prosthetics are attached to our bodies but that they can also be removed. The most common response to all this is “Cool!” You can see them appreciating the struggle and the mastery, because those are themes they know so well. What has been created is a mutual appreciation for the humanity of the other, so the next time they see someone with a prosthetic or a wheelchair, they are going to have a deeper appreciation for that person as a fellow human being rather than thinking them something to fear or avoid. So right there we have the power to humanize even the strangest of situations and instill compassion and understanding. If that doesn’t break down barriers, then I don’t know what does.

The book also allows children to stop and ask questions to themselves, a parent, guardian, or teacher. They can examine the bandages, notice the medical devices, and consider complexity. They can discuss all the things that Rescue is capable of doing to help Jessica. They can wonder how some of these things may be true for some of their friends or people in their community.

We also hope that a child who has had an amputation or has any disability will see themselves in Jessica. While we are beginning to see more people with disabilities in the media, there still aren’t enough, and they are often portrayed in shallow ways. We hope children with disabilities read this story and feel even prouder of what they are overcoming and the possibilities that still await them.

**Have there been any surprises or unexpected aspects about living your life with an assistance dog?**

**J:** When I was applying for a Service Dog through NEADS, I was focused on all the ways he was going to help me physically: bringing me my phone in an emergency, opening doors, picking up items off the floor, turning light switches on and off, etc. I did not think of the myriad ways he would help me and my family emotionally heal from trauma. Rescue was a safe topic to talk about during a time when hardly anything was light and not mixed with many emotions. I vividly remember family members and friends bringing us toys and treats to welcome our new addition. They would ask to see Rescue perform his tasks, and I would proudly show off his skills. Rescue offered distraction and unexpected laughs in a house that had been so quiet and somber.

Also, our relationship is a true partnership. He takes care of me, and I need to take care of him. Having him forced me to get off the couch and out of bed. I had to feed him, walk him, and make sure he had daily free/play time. His exercise became mine. His free time/relaxing time became mine. I had no idea how beneficial Rescue would be for me and for us.

**What do you hope readers will take away from Rescue and Jessica: A Life-Changing Friendship?**

**P:** Life is going to throw a lot of challenges your way, and while they may be daunting and appear insurmountable, you can achieve almost anything when you are part of a dedicated and loving team.
About NEADS

Rescue is a Service Dog who was trained by NEADS. NEADS/World Class Service Dogs is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in Princeton, Massachusetts. Established in 1976, NEADS is accredited by Assistance Dogs International, the governing body that establishes industry standards and practices.

NEADS offers a wide spectrum of assistance dog services, including Service Dogs for adults and children with a physical disability, Service Dogs for veterans, Hearing Dogs, and Social Dogs for children on the autism spectrum. Their dogs are also partnered with professionals in classroom, therapy, hospital, ministry, and courthouse settings.

What is a Service Dog?

A Service Dog is a dog trained specifically to help people with disabilities, such as visual, mobility, and hearing impairments, as well as mental illnesses and seizure disorders. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Service Dogs must have complete public access and are allowed to accompany their owners wherever they go: to school, to work, and on trains, buses, and airplanes.

To learn more about NEADS, please visit www.neads.org.
Meet the Real-Life RESCUE

Rescue is a black Labrador retriever and a trained assistance dog. He was born on May 13, 2012, and was trained for eighteen months by a Rhode Island prison inmate and by a weekend puppy raiser. He is Jessica’s best friend and is always by her side. (He loves Patrick a whole lot, too.) Rescue was donated to Jessica by NEADS, a nonprofit organization, about six months after her first amputation. He was named in honor of Jon Davies, a brave firefighter from Worcester, Massachusetts, who died in the line of duty on December 8, 2011, trying to rescue others. Rescue loves to swim, run in the snow, eat peanut butter and whole apples, play hide-and-seek with his squirrel toy, have playdates with other dogs, and, of course, cuddle with Jessica and Patrick.

You can follow Rescue on Instagram @RescueBoston.
What was the most important thing for you to be able to visually convey to young readers about the relationship between Rescue and Jessica?

We're meeting Rescue and Jessica at arguably the most uncertain points in their young lives, times of great change and adjustment. When they finally do meet and begin their new lives together, their futures are still unclear. However, now that they have each other, there's brand-new hope: by working together they are both better. I wanted to capture their hopeful resignation, that they each have to face their challenging new lives but they are stronger together.

Can you discuss some of the hidden elements in the illustrations that hint at the characters' real-life backgrounds and characteristics?

There are Boston locations throughout the book, because our city is an important place to all three of us. I've lived in the Boston area for nearly thirty years. Boston has real character and is a character in Rescue and Jessica: A Life-Changing Friendship. There are symbolic Boston locations to spot, like the Rose Kennedy Greenway maze, the Boston Common, Fenway Park, and a small homage to Robert McCloskey's Make Way for Ducklings. I've even used yellow and blue throughout, as they are the colors of the Boston Marathon. Some others include:

- Two fire engine numbers in the book honor particular firefighters: Jon Davies, in whose honor Rescue is named, and the firefighters who responded first to the Boston Marathon bombings.
- Patrick appears as Jessica's little brother.
- The brightest star visible from any part of Earth is Sirius in the constellation Canis Major, the Greater Dog. Sirius is sometimes called the Dog Star, and it has been used as a point of navigation for ages. Like Sirius guiding travelers, dog star Rescue shows Jessica a way to a better life with and beyond her disabilities, and that fills her and the reader with hope. So I thought it apt to include this constellation on the night before Jessica's second operation as she lies in her hospital bed feeling lost and uncertain.
- In the last spread we see Rescue, Jessica, and her family walk into the sunset on the Boston Public Garden footbridge. I've walked on that bridge during some sunsets and thought it could offer a warm and hopeful closing to the story. What I didn't know was the personal history Patrick and Jessica share on the bridge—they actually got engaged there. I learned about it only after they saw the sketches. I hope the scene connects with many readers who know the bridge and those who will come to know it.

What feedback did you get from the authors about the spectacular and touching art you have created?

I was anxious about working in unfamiliar territory stylistically, thematically, and personally. It's on a subject in which the authors—and, to a lesser degree, I—have a profound personal connection. I was drawing in a style that was less abstract and less cartoony than my previous work, depicting prosthetics, medical equipment, and characters as they lived through very tender lows as well as triumphs. Fortunately, Patrick and Jessica were so helpful and offered
It wasn’t until last year when I signed on to do this book that I saw the universe wink in the way that it sometimes does. There were threads of my past lives coming together: my dear friends at Candlewick asking me to illustrate a book written by a husband and wife who were marathon bombing survivors. It wasn’t lost on me that I could not have done this book without an intense focus—and so I knew I had made the right decision to quit my day job and go full-time as an author/illustrator. At last, here was a chance to do something constructive and bring my own personal experiences to bear in a way I knew how. With Patrick and Jessica’s text, I would draw a picture book for young readers that would help demystify what it means to be a person with disabilities, explain what it’s like to live and work with a Service Dog, and show that no matter what happens, there’s always some light at the end of the tunnel, somewhere. Truly all of these experiences have taught me that, in so many ways—big and small, seen and unseen—I am one lucky person.

Scott Magoon has been designing, writing, and illustrating books for young readers since 2003. He says, “I am deeply inspired by how each of us—regardless of our challenges, advantages, or species—is just a little bit better when we work together. Patrick, Jessica, and Rescue exemplify this every single day, and it has been an honor for me to create this book alongside them.” Scott Magoon is also the illustrator of *Big Mean Mike* with Candlewick Press and lives in Reading, Massachusetts.