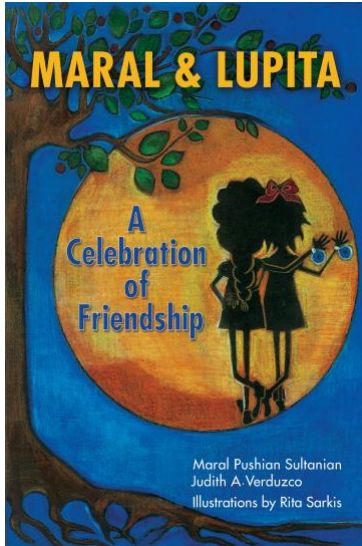


November 1, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Local Mental Health Therapists Release Early Chapter Book *Maral & Lupita: A Celebration of Friendship*

GLENDALE, CA. — Mascot Books announces the release of *Maral & Lupita: A Celebration of Friendship*, written by Dr. Maral Pushian Sultanian and Judith A. Verduzco, with illustrations by Rita Sarkis.



It's the first day of fourth grade! Lupita and her family have just emigrated from Mexico and settled into their new home in the United States of America. Maral, a bit of a know-it-all, looks across the playground and notices the new girl in town. What follows is the birth of a friendship, the merging of cultures, and all that comes with these sorts of things! Throughout the pages of *Maral & Lupita: A Celebration of Friendship*, readers will find how friendships are born, nurtured, challenged, and celebrated.

The book was inspired by the authors' careers. As mental health practitioners, they have had the privilege and unique opportunity to work closely with children and their families to address acculturation processes, mental health, interpersonal conflicts, and overall wellness, all themes widely represented in the book.

"Through our book, we hope to inspire childlike wonder in the reader," said Verduzco. "We invite the reader into the inner landscape of the protagonist's thoughts, a place where curiosity, agape love, and initiative reside in their purest form. Through the journey of these protagonists into the Mexican and Armenian cultures, we learn how one may become an ambassador of peace and friendship."

Sultanian said that interpersonal skills such as exchanging ideas, sharing feelings and voicing interests are intentionally woven throughout the story, which is told through a child's perspective.

"These skills are imperative for the child and we, the loving adults in their lives, hold sacred space for them to develop these skills," she said. "After reading this book, I hope children see and experience that the prospect of friendships is theirs, the chance for kindness exchanged is a gift, and the opportunity to know and share culture is a responsibility," she said.

Maral & Lupita: A Celebration of Friendship is the recipient of the Gold Mom's Choice Award in the Juvenile Books (ages 9-12) category. The Mom's Choice Award is recognized globally as the reliable symbol representing the best in family-friendly products.

Dr. Maral Pushian Sultanian has spent the majority of her professional career in service to youth and their families, entering the field of mental health in the community-based sector and finding herself now engrossed with the privilege of serving foster youth in Ventura County, California. She draws creative inspiration from her two children, Leo and William.

Judith A. Verduzco, LCSW, MPA, finds inspiration to collaborate and develop stories such as *Maral & Lupita: A Celebration of Friendship* from the myriad relationships that bring light and love to each of her creative endeavors. She is an ideas person who nurtures their fruition, bringing them to life. She has spent the majority of her professional career in public administration and in service to children, youth, and their families in and through community-based mental health.

Sultanian and Verduzco have established Palomas Ink, LLC, a consulting firm that promotes social justice and mental health through the art of writing and integrative arts therapeutic modalities. They hope to make *Maral & Lupita* a series.

Maral & Lupita: A Celebration of Friendship (ISBN: 978-1-64543-920-2) is on sale now from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Amplify Publishing Group (APG). It is distributed by APG, Ingram, the American Wholesale Book Company, Baker & Taylor, and Follett Library Resources.

Connect with the authors on their [website](#) or on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#). To set up an interview, reading, signing, or for information regarding *Maral & Lupita: A Celebration of Friendship*, please contact info@forewordpublicity.com.

About Amplify Publishing Group

Amplify Publishing Group is a leading independent hybrid publisher that is passionate about ideas and voices that need to be heard. APG publishes across a wide variety of genres and is the culmination of twenty years of experience acquiring, producing, marketing, and distributing books. It is home to a number of distinct imprints, including Amplify Publishing, Mascot Kids, and Mascot Books.

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