

Sydney Taylor Honor Acceptance Comments

by

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Thank you so much for bestowing the Sydney Taylor Honor Award for Younger Readers on *ZAYDE COMES TO LIVE*. Although I have published 19 books for children, this is my first picture book, my first book of Jewish content, and my first book ever to win an award. I wish Kristina Swarner were able to be here, too, because *ZAYDE* would not have been all it could be without her sensitive and wondrous illustrations. I understand that many of you have had the good fortune to have met Kristina, perhaps more than once. I still await that honor, but hopefully this summer we will finally meet if she visits her in-laws in Hartford.

Although *ZAYDE* is dedicated to my five grandsons, it would not have existed without my mother's eight-and-a-half year battle with Stage 4 cancer. I became a hospice volunteer after her diagnosis because I was terrified. I figured the more I knew about death, like childbirth, the less frightening it would become. I had no idea—until a hospice rabbi told me—that Jewish patients in hospice tend to be more anxious and less accepting than other patients. We focus on mitzvah, the here-and-now, not the Hereafter.

My hope is that with this award, *ZAYDE COMES TO LIVE* might continue to be a catalyst for a difficult but necessary conversation about death with children we love. May those whose lives *ZAYDE* touches come away with a feeling of

Shalom—peace and completeness—replacing fear of death with renewed appreciation of life.

Again, thank you for this amazing honor.