

Author Richard D. Kennedy, Jr. Releases Three Picture Books Celebrating Courage, Ambition, and Family Fun

Shauny Swims, Zahria Zaps, and Moving with Marty feature young Black heroes who face their fears, pursue their dreams, and find humor in everyday life.



Alexandria, Virginia Oct 3, 2026 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Children's author Richard D. Kennedy, Jr. announces the release of three illustrated books for young readers: *Shauny Swims*, *Zahria Zaps*, and *Moving with Marty*. Each book centers on a Black child and a loving, supportive family, and each tells an uplifting story about confidence, determination, and the joy of growing up. Two of the books close with a "Words I Learned in This Book" glossary that builds vocabulary as children read.

Shauny Swims

Ten-year-old Shauny has been on the Tiger Sharks swim team for two years, and he is as responsible as he is talented: he lays out his swim bag, writes his events on his arm, and sets his alarm the night before every swim meet. But on meet day, the nerves set in. Many of the swimmers are older and more experienced, and Shauny is one of only a few Black swimmers at the pool. He was also disqualified in the backstroke at his last swim meet, and he couldn't stop asking himself "What if?" With help from his mom and his coach, Shauny learns to focus on the one thing he can control: the water between his lane lines. The result is a thrilling race, a first-place finish, and a personal best by four seconds. *Shauny Swims* is an encouraging story about managing anxiety, trusting your preparation, and finding courage in the moment that matters.

Zahria Zaps

Zahria has been fascinated with electricity her whole life. A high school sophomore at a STEM school, she dreams of becoming an electrician like her dad, and she has been taking apart and rebuilding electronics since she was little. When some classmates tell her that girls can't be electricians, she refuses to be discouraged. Her science teacher, Mrs. Thompson, hands her an application for a competitive summer apprenticeship program, and Zahria spends her spring break designing and building her own wireless phone charger. Through trial, error, and persistence, she perfects her invention and presents it to a panel of professionals. *Zahria Zaps* champions girls in STEM and the skilled trades, and it shows readers that failure is part of the learning process and that no one else gets to decide what they can become.

Moving With Marty

Moving day is a week away, and Dad is determined to get rid of the pesky fly that has been buzzing around the kitchen. There is just one problem: little Ja'Nae has named him Marty, and her big brother Isaiah is sure that "if you name him, he will follow us!" Sure enough, Marty turns up in the car, at the store, in the new house, and even on the family's airplane to Denver for Isaiah's soccer tournament. *Moving With Marty* is a lighthearted, laugh-out-loud family story that helps young children navigate big changes like moving, with a playful twist ending that will keep readers guessing.

Why These Books Matter

Across all three titles, Kennedy offers children stories where they can see themselves as swimmers, engineers, and the heroes of their own adventures. His books show involved parents, encouraging teachers and coaches, and kids who meet challenges with heart. They are ideal for home reading, classrooms, and libraries, and they open easy conversations about confidence, perseverance, and following your dreams.

"My goal with my writing is to celebrate family, and to highlight children of color in fields where they are underrepresented. Representation matters more now than it ever has before, and I want every child who reads one of my books to know that if they don't fit in, it's because they were made to stand out.

Through reading my books, it is my hope that every child who reads them learns perseverance, mental toughness, resilience, and the importance of unapologetically embracing their talents, differences, and even their quirkiness. There are more books to come, and I am excited about the impact that will be made from my writing.”

About the Author

Richard D. Kennedy, Jr. Is originally from Albany, GA. He currently lives in Warner Robins, GA where his is a teacher, lifeguard, and swim instructor. He comes from a huge family of a mother, father (deceased), four sisters, two brothers (deceased), and nearly 20 nieces and nephews. He is married with two children. His inspiration comes from his own experience as competitive swimmer and swim coach, fields in which people of color are underrepresented. The character's names for his books are inspired by the names of his children, nieces, and nephews. Richard holds an associate and bachelor's degrees in special education, and a master's degree in sports coaching.

Book Details

Shauny Swims by Richard D. Kennedy, Jr. (2025)
Illustrated by [Manat Gfx] | ISBN: [979-8307351680] | Price: [\$14.99]

Zahria Zaps by Richard D. Kennedy, Jr., illustrated by Mannat Gfx (2025)
ISBN: [979-8283805306] | Price: [\$14.99]

Moving With Marty by Richard D. Kennedy, Jr. (2026)
Illustrated by [Manat-Hana] | ISBN: [979-8254752868] | Price: [\$14.99]

Available at: Shauny Swims available at www.amazon.com, www.barnesandnoble.com

Moving with Marty and Zahria Zaps available at www.amazon.com

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