

'The Knotted Tree' Book Invites Middle and High School Youth to Climb Beyond Fear and Find Strength in Their Own Stories

A poetic parable of hope and self-discovery for classrooms and counselors; \$1 from every book supports The Jed Foundation

AUSTIN, TX, UNITED STATES, November 18, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- At a time when so many

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Rich Phillips, Author, The Knotted Tree

young people are searching for strength and belonging, The Knotted Tree offers a story of courage, connection, and hope. Written by Rich Phillips and illustrated by Amanda DiLisi, the book follows three travelers who encounter a weathered, knotted tree shaped by storms, and learn that its knots are not marks of damage, but of endurance. Through poetic language and evocative imagery, The Knotted Tree helps readers of all ages see that the challenges we face can become the very steps that help us rise up and rediscover our dreams and purpose.

For middle and high school classrooms and youth counseling programs, The Knotted Tree offers a shared

language for exploring fear, failure, and the courage to keep going. It encourages students to recognize that adversity can shape, strengthen, and prepare them for greater heights.

“I wrote The Knotted Tree to remind young people that every struggle has meaning,” said Rich Phillips, author and founder of publishing house Make Life Extraordinary. “Fear, not failure, is what stops us from growing. The tree represents the challenges we face in life, and when we climb and use what once held us back as a foothold, we begin to see the path more clearly and discover the direction we’re meant to go.”

Each illustration by Amanda DiLisi brings emotional depth to the story, using texture, light, and color to express the quiet strength found in resilience. Drawing from her experience teaching therapeutic art to adolescents, DiLisi’s work creates a safe, reflective space for young readers to see their own emotions mirrored with empathy and care.

“My hope was to create a visual space where students could see their own journey,” said DiLisi.

“Art can do what words sometimes can’t. It can help young people process emotion and find calm in their own resilience.”

The Knotted Tree includes a foreword from Dr. Laura Erickson-Schroth, chief medical officer of The Jed Foundation (JED), who shares practical guidance for young people on building resilience and reaching out for help when they need it.

“Resilience isn’t about pretending everything is fine — it’s about strengthening your coping skills and enhancing your connections,” said Dr. Erickson-Schroth. “Books like The Knotted Tree give students and teachers a starting place from which to talk openly about mental health and remind young people that they don’t have to face challenges alone.”

Aligned with that mission, \$1 from every copy sold will be donated to JED, supporting programs that protect emotional health and prevent suicide among teens and young adults.

The Knotted Tree is available now at www.knottedtreebook.com, Amazon.com and bookstores worldwide. Educators and mental-health professionals can download classroom discussion guides and reflection activities through the website.

About the Author

Rich Phillips has spent more than 25 years advising leaders across technology, aerospace, and energy sectors on storytelling and communication. As founder of Make Life Extraordinary, he bridges creativity and purpose to inspire resilience, courage, and connection. Visit: <https://www.makelifextraordinary.com>.

About the Illustrator

Amanda DiLisi is an artist and educator whose work explores healing through creative expression. Her paintings have been featured in galleries across Ohio and reflect her commitment to helping students use art as a therapeutic outlet. Visit: <https://amandadilisi.weebly.com/>

About The Jed Foundation (JED)

JED is a nonprofit that protects emotional health and prevents suicide for our nation’s teens and young adults. We’re partnering with high schools, colleges, school districts, and youth-serving community-based organizations to strengthen their mental health, substance misuse, and suicide prevention programs and systems. We’re equipping teens and young adults with the skills and knowledge to help themselves and each other. We’re encouraging community awareness, understanding, and action for young adult mental health. Connect with JED at <https://www.jedfoundation.org>.

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