

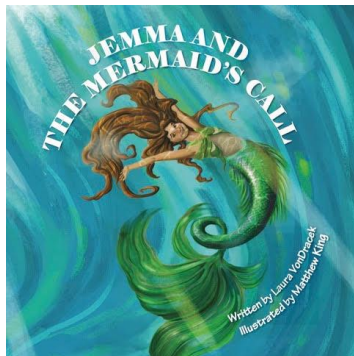
**Hear Laura VonDracek Read from Her New Book  
*Jemma and the Mermaid's Call*  
at the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum**

**Santa Barbara, CA. April 27, 2023** – Continuing its book launch series, the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum (SBMM) is pleased to host the local launch of *Jemma and the Mermaid's Call* a new children's book, written by local author Laura VonDracek and illustrated by Matthew King. This special community event on Saturday, May 13, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. will take place on the Museum's patio. It will include a reading from the book followed by a family art activity, creating mermaid bookmarks. Cost is free, but space is limited. Registration is required by emailing [reservations@sbmm.org](mailto:reservations@sbmm.org) or online at: <https://sbmm.org/santa-barbara-events/>



Inspired by: <https://www.redtedart.com/mermaid-bookmark-div/>

**About the Book**



*Jemma and the Mermaid's Call* is the story of a plucky and high spirited mermaid who loves living in her ocean world. Whether exploring for treasure or swimming along with her many marine friends, she delights in the beautiful underwater landscape and bountiful sea life that surrounds her...until one day when darkness encompasses her home. As she swims off to investigate this mystery, she bumps up against the huge problem above her — a giant floating island of trash! Not knowing how to solve this far-reaching dilemma by herself, she calls together all the sea life and Mer tribes of the world and, as a group, they hatch a plan to clean up the mess. In a delightful and hopeful tale, this beautifully illustrated story tackles a timely and important environmental issue and how to solve it through the help of community.

According to reviewer Kirson Levinsohn, executive director of New Haven Reads, "This delightful, beautifully illustrated tale has an important environmental message for children, highlighting this very real issue but also containing a can-do spirit and hopeful outcome. This is definitely a must read book!"

Autographed copies of this beautifully illustrated hardcover book, which is designed for children ages 4-9 as well as ocean-lovers of all ages, will be available on the day of the event for \$24.99.

## About the Author

Born and raised in New York, along the waterways of the Atlantic Ocean and the Long Island Sound, Laura VonDracek now calls Santa Barbara, California home and can often be found walking and cleaning up beaches while searching for sea glass treasures to incorporate into her art. As an artist, she loves using her hands and imagination with a variety of materials, including ceramic, stones, sea glass, old bottles, feathers, driftwood, and more. Journaling for most of her life, VonDracek sees writing as a necessary and important part of her creative life. As she



explains it, “Approaching the blank page from a stream-of-consciousness place has always allowed me to let thoughts and feelings flow freely and find their way onto the page and then into visual form.”

As a long-time swimmer, Von Dracek has long been fascinated by mermaids, and as a lover of all waterways — oceans, seas, rivers, brooks, lakes — and the earth itself, it seemed natural and fitting for her to bring forth so many personally meaningful elements into this story. As she explains it, “As the condition of our earth and its waterways, along with the life within them, is facing environmental harm, we must all do what we can to clean-up our earth, our oceans, and our homes so we can continue to enjoy the beauty and life they offer us.” Jemma’s story is VonDracek’s effort to transform her personal journaling into the public storytelling world. In her own words, “So here I am/we are...A writer becomes an author and a mermaid becomes a community leader!” For more information about VonDracek, visit: <https://lauravondracek.com/>

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Founded in 2000 inside the harbor’s historic Waterfront Center Building (formerly the Naval Reserve Building), the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum creates exhibitions and hands-on educational experiences that celebrate more than 13,000 years of maritime history in our region—from Chumash culture to today’s surfing scenes and environmental movements. Featuring the impressive *First Order Fresnel Lighthouse Lens* from Point Conception, SBMM’s current exhibits explore the *History of Oil in Santa Barbara Channel & Chumash Use of Asphaltum*, the history of commercial diving, the *Honda Disaster*, *Whales Are Superheroes!*, *Wives and Daughters: Keepers of the Light*, and *The Lure of Lighthouses & Dancing Waves*.

SBMM is located at 113 Harbor Way, Suite 190, Santa Barbara, CA 93109. Visit [sbmm.org](http://sbmm.org) or call (805) 962-8404 for details.