

Hi! My name is Lauren Stohler, and I am an author and illustrator, which means I write books and then also draw the pictures. I live in an apartment near Syracuse, New York, with my husband Gareth. I like to play games and go on long walks. My favorite food is pizza (but I change my mind a lot).

One of the books I have written (and drawn) is called, "I Am a GREAT Friend!" It's about a baby capybara.

Do you know what a capybara is? It's the CUTEST. It's a bristly brown rodent with a soft squarish nose. It's medium-sized, like a dog that's not too big and not too small, and if I had to compare it to another animal I know, I'd say it looks sort of like a big, tail-less squirrel. If you've never seen a capybara, try to draw one from that description and I'll bet you will invent a completely new animal, because I am not very good at describing capybaras.

(Did you try it? There's space for drawing, right here:)

Okay, I hope you finished your drawing because when you turn the page there's going to be a picture of a capybara. Ready?

TA-DA!



Anyway, in this book, Baby Capybara reeeally wants bird friends to sit on his back, just like all the other capybaras. The problem is, the birds don't like to do ANYTHING that Baby Capybara likes to do. (Uh-oh.)

Capybaras were the perfect animal for this book because, in real life, they have SO MANY friends in the wild. Here is a short list of animals that will sit on a capybara's back: monkeys, birds, other capybaras, and me. (Well, okay, not REALLY me, but I would if I could. Wouldn't you?!)

Obviously, capybaras must have a friendship superpower. I wish they could talk so they could tell me their secret. But, truthfully, I think we all have our own special friendship superpower. Mine might be creativity: I love to make up stories and draw comics with my friends!

What is your friendship superpower? Can you make people laugh? Can you tell when someone needs help? Are you great at sharing? Do you have a cool handshake? There are so many different superpowers, I can't even think of them all! Can you imagine all the friendship superpowers in the people around you RIGHT NOW?!

Whoah.

When I was in school, my best friend's name was Paula. We would turn on a big blue light, put on outer space music, and pretend we were in a space station. We were good friends because we liked to do the same kinds of things. Her friendship superpowers were that she was very funny, and that she was nice to everybody!

What do you like about your friends? Are they kind to others? Do they have interesting thoughts, or talk to you about their feelings? Maybe they are strong, quiet, brave, or hardworking! Maybe they can sing, or dance, or draw! There are so many great things to discover about people, don't you think? What do you hope people will discover about you?

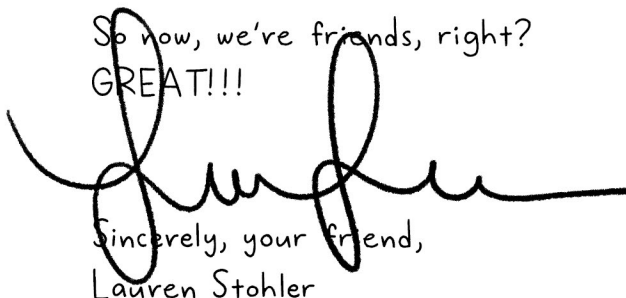
Sometimes, friendship seems like a magic trick. One day, you're not friends with somebody, and then, POOF, one day you are! I don't know how it works! But I wonder: what if an alien (a cute one, not a scary one) came to earth, and I had to help it learn earth stuff? What if it wanted to make friends, and didn't know how? If you had to teach an alien how to be a good earth friend, what would you tell them?

I think I would tell them to start with a good, "hello." A good hello never hurts. And a smile! Don't forget the smile! I guess you could say "hello" with an angry face but I don't think it would work as well. Try it and let me know how it goes!

Anyway, this letter is MY version of saying "hello"...and here's my smiley face:



So now, we're friends, right?
GREAT!!!


Sincerely, your friend,
Lauren Stohler