

CARL THE COLLECTOR Q&A:

An Interview With Series Creator and Director

Zachariah OHora, Series Creator
& Lisa Whittick, Series Director



Tell us about Carl and your purpose and vision behind building his character.



ZACH: Carl is an autistic raccoon who loves to collect things. I'm a collector myself and obsessed with raccoons and other fuzzy woodland creatures. Carl came out of a rejected book idea, but the character was one that I couldn't let go of. The real purpose of Carl is to spread empathy and celebrate the entire spectrum of humanity. (Sometimes we need raccoons to show us who we really are!). It's a show not just about loveable neurodiverse characters, but it's also a show about self-identity and building friendships. Friendships are built on things we share, but lasting and strong ones are also built by appreciating our differences.

Why was it important for there to be a children's show featuring a character with autism?



LISA: Authentic representation matters in all forms of media for all people. It's estimated that 1 in 32 children in the US are diagnosed as autistic and we're excited for them to see themselves represented on screen. By telling stories that are relevant to the autism community in a way that doesn't minimize their experiences, families will not only feel validated and seen, but the public will also benefit by becoming more educated and empathetic towards autistic people.

ZACH: I couldn't have phrased it better than what Lisa said. The idea is to show people as they are. The struggles, the triumphs, the unique perspectives, and finding out that even though we are all different, we are more the same than anything.

What do you want viewers to know about the series Carl the Collector?

ZACH: I'd like people to know that this is a show about an ideal group of friends. People that you REALLY want to hang out with and spend time with. You know that no matter what your meltdown is or what you are going through, they have your back. It's fun and funny and hopefully leaves you with the warm fuzzies.

LISA: I want viewers to know just how much love and care went on behind the scenes to bring Carl and his friends to life. Before the show went into full production, we spent weeks researching, testing and experimenting with exactly how we were going to portray autism to our viewers through characters like Carl and Lotta. Every single crew member understood just how important it was to get this right and given the overwhelmingly positive response we've gotten from, not just the autistic community, but the public at large, I believe that all that love and care has paid off in a huge way.

What positive impact for the ASD community do you hope that Carl has?

LISA: I hope that by watching "Carl the Collector," people will learn just how exceptional autistic individuals are, and in turn, find ways to work collaboratively with them to create great things. The direct impact Carl has had in my own community has been truly wonderful. Many autistic youth were hired to provide us with character voices. Neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals worked side by side as writers, artists, and production staff, each bringing their own experiences and expertise to the table to ensure the show felt authentic from everyone's point of view. It has been one of the biggest joys of my life to see the impact this fuzzy little raccoon has had on so many real people at home and around the world.

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If Carl could send a message to children who are watching his show that share some of the same characteristics, what would it be?

LISA: When things get hard and you're not sure what you're supposed to do, remember to take a BIG belly breath and Collect Your Thoughts. We got this!

ZACH: Collect the thing you love. Share the things you collect. And you'll collect some great friends who share your love.

Where and when can people tune in to watch Carl the Collector?

CARL THE COLLECTOR is available to stream now for free across PBS KIDS platforms. It is also available on local PBS stations, please check your local listings for when it airs on WPSU.