



# PRESS INFORMATION

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## “WE NEED TO ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO DREAM” WORLD KIDS COLOURING DAY 2019: A CONVERSATION WITH ULRIKE JAEHRLING

On May 6, the World Kids Colouring Day takes place for the 11th time. With the theme “Follow your dream...!” STAEDTLER calls for little artists to put their dream jobs on paper. The global day of action is to inspire kids to draw and be creative - and all for a good cause.

This year, Ulrike Jährling is supporting STAEDTLER as an expert. The journalist and presenter who, among other things, hosts the children’s programme “Kakadu” (cockatoo) for Deutschlandfunk, talks about why creative experimentation is so important for children’s development and why there should be space for creative expression in every kid’s room.

**Ms Jährling, in this year, you are supporting STAEDTLER and the World Kids Colouring Day for the first time. What does the day of action mean to you personally?**

The World Kids Colouring Day is a good example through which we can show the power that can be released through creativity.

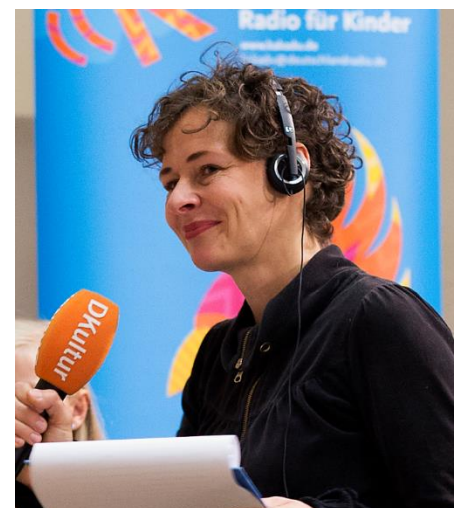
In my work for public media and also on a smaller scale I frequently take responsibility by conveying values.

**What role do good causes play in this context?**

I can see that children nowadays know a lot about the world. Today's kids know that many children are worse off than they are. That’s something that bothers them. They want to help but cannot do so, particularly because crisis-ridden countries are simply too far away and therefore too abstract. That’s why the World Kids Colouring Day is such a great approach: I can draw a picture and thereby make my contribution. I can assume responsibility and make a difference. It’s a great signal to say - when I draw and somebody else does the same and somebody else draws, too, we can soon be a really strong crowd.

**What should you pay attention to in order to get children excited about creative topics?**

The strength of good projects for kids is that they cause kids to become active. Themes must be connected to their living environment: emotions, family, pets or worries concerning school. Children want to be addressed emotionally and have fun. No expectations, please - not even when it comes to drawing. It’s great that you’re drawing and experimenting! You can get children to engage in these activities through fun-filled and pleasure-



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*Ulrike Jährling hosts the children’s programme “Kakadu” (cockatoo). Jährling, who trained as a music teacher, has been working daily with children for 20 years. Her childhood dream was to become an ornithologist.*



oriented action. And through appreciation. We talk about the pictures and the ideas behind them. But we don't judge them.

### **Aren't children, in principle, always creative?**

Kids are born curious, they have imagination, make noise, draw spontaneously and make the world ring out with joy. The youngest kids are always creative when they have the space they need. How children further develop extremely depends on their living conditions - on the families they grow up in, what kind of role models and possibilities are on offer and what kind of creative spaces are available.

### **And that's where the parents come into play or who do you think is responsible?**

Well, if, for example, an iPad finds its way into a kid's room - a device which can be used for creative games - then a film is quickly turned on and creativity instantly disappears. Our kids are overwhelmed with stimuli. Kids' rooms are extremely cramped. They have extremely busy schedules. And genuine creativity actually emerges when there isn't much going on. Parents are under immense pressure in our meritocracy. Creativity is really great, but it seems to generate stress for parents. Some have extremely high expectations.

**“GENUINE CREATIVITY  
ACTUALLY EMERGES  
WHEN THERE ISN'T MUCH  
GOING ON.”**

### **Do technological influences or an abundance of instructions block creativity?**

It's not technological devices per se. The question is, rather, how we deal with evolving lifestyles and how we protect and guide our children. In the city, children have less freedom than before, that's still different in villages. Children need their natural investigative spirit in order to develop: explore sensory activities and natural laws - I consider nature and a natural environment a really important space in order to make first discoveries! Digital literacy is indispensable, but first you need sensory experiences.

**“THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS  
OF DRAWING AND PAINTING,  
MANY TECHNIQUES CAN BE  
LEARNED. I CAN FILL A SHEET IN  
SO MANY DIFFERENT WAYS.”**

### **What is particularly important for educational institutions, schools and nursery schools in order to ensure high-quality support?**

There has to be a variety of materials and, of course, instructors' know-how. Well-trained teachers know which material to use and when. At the beginning, a sharp pencil rather stirs up fears; I can get much further with a large brush and colours. Today, many children have motor deficits. It's great when teachers take countermeasures and, for example, put some large sheets of paper in front of themselves and the kids and then start drawing big, colourful circles with big crayons and full physical effort. This way, bodies loosen up and children get over their shyness. There are different kinds of drawing and painting, many

techniques can be learned. I can fill a sheet in so many different ways. Let the brush become really bristly, then dab diagonally and suddenly my painted cat gets a really soft coat. That's fun and that's when a child will want to continue. We need authentic educators whose enthusiasm is contagious. And, of course, you can also have a look at the "greats"- maybe a visit to a museum or a gallery. Children should learn that they can be daring. Franz Marc painted a blue horse, Gauguin lets a goat fly. Not everything has to be real. Art is free, creativity should also be free. And an assessment in the form of grades doesn't belong here.

### **Are the right conditions for creative inspiration available everywhere?**

That takes me back to your question what educational institutions need. Appreciation! Also in the form of good equipment and sufficient personnel, whose work often isn't sufficiently recognised. In general, a lot of emphasis is placed on core subjects. That's important. But it's also important that we have well-qualified music and art



teachers. Unfortunately, the lobby for creative spaces is smaller. Of course, that also depends a lot on the school type.

#### **How would you advise parents who are looking for special sources of inspiration?**

There are lots of parent blogs on the net where you can get some inspiration. You can get a lot of inspiration in nursery schools and schools, many museums offer great opportunities for children to join in. An event like the World Kids Colouring Day is great to get parents on board. Such a day of action can be a special statement!

#### **The theme of this year's World Kids Colouring Day is "Follow your dream...!" How can you encourage children to realize their own dreams?**

How can I achieve self-realization as a child? I can encourage children to dream. Not from my grown-up viewpoint, which is very realistic and detached but also lacks creativity. We sometimes unconsciously crash into our kids' visions. I think it's important that we keep kids' dream worlds open and take children seriously and make them strong, respect their personality and offer them space to develop.

**„KIDS DON'T HAVE AIMS – KIDS HAVE DREAMS.“**

**How do kids' dreams and aims change?**

Kids don't actually have aims, that's adult vocabulary. But kids have dreams. Those children who could become really strong as kids, who could go their own way, had parents who displayed a certain calm, who didn't attach that much importance to school. Parents who waited, who encouraged and motivated but who also sat back. These are kids who will go their own way, realize dreams and aims because they have self-confidence.

#### **Are children's career aspirations shaped in this way?**

What children would like to be is always a question of time and environment. Nowadays I frequently hear "environmental activist" as a career aspiration and my son wanted to be a "freelancer." But the world of books, films and media continues to exert influence: children want to be archaeologists like Indiana Jones or a football player like Ronaldo. To some extent, role models are still being strongly promoted. When we only see or hear about male doctors, lawyers and judges and female hairdressers, teachers, educators and cashiers, something is wrong. This is often reflected in "When I grow up" pictures. This is where we as parents, media professionals and educators have the responsibility to change things.

#### **What was your childhood dream?**

I wanted to become an ornithologist. My father was good at recognizing bird calls in our garden. That makes the fact that I now host a programme that has a bird as its mascot even funnier. The programme's name is "Kakadu" (cockatoo). So much for how childhood shapes you.

**Thank you very much for the interview, Ms Jährling!**



### About STAEDTLER

STAEDTLER is one of the oldest industrial companies in Germany and one of the world's leading manufacturers and suppliers of writing, painting, drawing and creative products. As an international company with headquarters in Germany and a high export quota, STAEDTLER employs 3,000 people worldwide, more than 1,200 of them in Germany. Its origins play a major role in this traditional company and almost three quarters of its products are produced in Germany. This makes STAEDTLER the largest manufacturer of wood-cased pencils, OHP pens, erasers, mechanical pencil leads and modelling clays in Europe and proud of its long production tradition "Made in Germany." [www.staedtler.com](http://www.staedtler.com)