



Award-winning illustrator and artist, Marion Clark Weathers used her hands and imagination to create the number people, their animal friends and the mysterious Gum Swamp. A native of Orangeburg, SC, she grew up along the banks of the Edisto River near a swamp with alligators! Weathers graduated from the University of Georgia with a B.F.A. and has been a practicing artist ever since. She is a Signature member of the Watercolor Society of NC.

She is involved in many arts organizations, commercial art ventures, and shows her art in exhibits across North Carolina. She is currently doing post-graduate study in painting at Barton College.

A few years ago, Leigh Ballance sought out Marion, a longtime friend since his banking days in Rocky Mount, to bring his ideas about his number characters who he had dreamed about when he was a second grader. As Ballance told her his childhood dreams about numbers, a response to his fears about learning math, Weathers began sketching each number from zero through nine. Based on his descriptions, she endowed each number with their own personality, gender and individual attire, Weathers' sketches soon led to the collaboration that created *The Secret of Gum Swamp* and other stories based on the numbers. The pair

created Gum Swamp Publishing in 2014, to publish children's books, games, and materials related to the series. Two more number people books are in the works.

Weathers has been included in juried exhibitions across the state from New Bern to Boone, NC and has been an exhibiting artist at numerous Arts Councils. She served as President of Nash Arts Council in 2001 and American Advertising Federation, TEAM Chapter, in 1992. Weathers has received the National Award of Excellence three times from the American Chamber of Commerce, Best in Show from the American Library Association. She owned and operated Art Masters Gallery in Rocky Mount for more than three years, but now has her own gallery on Country Club Road beside Goose Creek Lake in Rocky Mount, North Carolina.