

FRIENDS NEWS



The Newsletter of the Friends of the Johnson City Public Library

Fall 2008

Be a Volunteer!

The library has adopted a Friendly Visitor Program. This program will offer library services to citizens around the area who otherwise cannot reach the library due to a disability. This service is available to anyone who is designated homebound by his/her doctor or qualified caregiver. The



program needs volunteers to deliver books and other library materials as well as stay for a friendly visit. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, you may fill out a Friendly Visitor application available at the circulation desk or call (423) 434-4450 for more information.

If you know someone who might benefit from this service, call about patron applications and more information on getting started.

Did You Know?

The library has adopted a new non-smoking policy. Effective September 1, smoking is no longer allowed on library grounds. Patrons, however, may smoke in their car. We thank you for aiding in and understanding our efforts to keep the library clean.

A Monster of a Sale!

It's time to hold our annual Fall Book Sale. Get your costume ready. Anyone that shows up in costume can draw for a special prize!

Our storage is overflowing; this may be one of our biggest sales yet!

What: Friends of the Johnson City Public Library Fall Book Sale

When: Saturday, October 25

Where: Johnson City Public Library, Jones Meeting rooms

Time: 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. for the general public

Special Friends Preview: Friday, October 24, 6 - 8 p.m.

There will be a special preview for all FOL members on October 24. Bring your membership card for admittance to the preview. If you can't find your card, we will have a member's list at the door. If your membership has expired, you can renew it at the sale!

We need volunteers for set-up and clean-up – call the library if you can help or e-mail friends@jcpl.net!



In Memory of Kay Herd

Kay Herd had been an active Friend of the Library, board member and library volunteer for many years. If you frequented the library, you knew Kay's smiling face. Her energy and enthusiasm was endless. She kept our membership roles organized for many years.

Kay passed away August 7, 2008. We will all miss her a great deal. Kay's family asked for donations to the Friends in lieu of flowers. Many generous donations have been received. The Friends are planning to help with a special new library program with Kay's memorials

FOL Farewell

We would like to thank the following people whose contributions to the library will be missed.

Bethany Farmer

Bethany served in the Circulation Department

Lydia Guinn

Lydia also worked in the Circulation Department

Rebecca Huddleston

Rebecca served as Teen Coordinator

Nelson Worley

Nelson served as Library Director from 2006-2008

Congratulations

The Friends would like to congratulate the following members as they celebrate mile-stone anniversaries of working at the library.

- Gina-Thayer Coleman – 25 years
- Linda Blanton – 20 years

Get-to-Know

By Josh Archer

For this edition of the Get-to-Know section, I decided to interview someone who could give us some insight into the recent success of the Book Fair. I chatted with **Helen Whittaker**, one of the featured authors who presented her work during the Spring Book Fair. Helen also serves as Library Director at the Kingsport Public Library, which makes her perspective much more valuable. I posed a number of questions to which she kindly replied.

JA – Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? We know that you work at the Kingsport Public Library, but could you tell us a little about yourself?

HW – I was born in Darlington, S.C. but I've lived in Kingsport now for 22 years. I've been the Library Director for the past eight years, having served as Director at other libraries. My position at the Kingsport Library involves a lot of management and supervision, but there aren't any typical days. I could be immersed in budget preparation or writing grants one day, and spend the next day filling in for someone at reference, troubleshooting a technology issue, designing a library brochure, or calling the police about someone panhandling.

JA – I'm amazed that you find the time to do both write and manage the Kingsport Library at the same time. What inspired you to become a writer?

HW – I really can't trace it back to an 'inspiration'; I've just always enjoyed writing. It started with poetry and short stories in junior high.

JA – Your book *Sisters in the Air* is the story of Louise Thaden and Phoebe Omlie. Can you tell us a little something about the book without spoiling it for your readers?

HW – They first met during the first Women's National Air Race in 1929 and remained close friends. The story grew out of my research of this race.

Louise won this race – beating famous aviator Amelia Earhart. Actually, Louise beat Amelia in every air race they participated in together and, was a much better pilot than Amelia. I thought the public needed to know more about Louise – and her friend, Phoebe, who was very active in aviation in Tennessee.

JA – Interesting historical approach. What was your biggest obstacle that you had to overcome as a writer?

HW – Selling the book. I spent two years researching my material and it took me about seven years and several different versions before I finally sold it to a publisher.



JA – Are you currently writing another book? If so, can we know a little about it?

HW – Actually, I'm now trying to find an agent for a screenplay I wrote a few years ago.

JA – Ok I won't push my luck asking for specifics if you'll answer this one: What's your perspective, as a presenting author, of our recent book fair?

HW – I thought the book fair was very well organized and the library staff was very accommodating with the set ups, coffee in the morning and lunch provided. They even came by with water during the day! I also thought it was a great idea to try to have it when you had other activities going on in the building. We have tried book fairs in the past at KPL, with five authors at one time, and turnout was very dismal unless it's a very well known author, or a local one with a lot of interest. We had a NY Times bestselling romance author last

year, and the audience attendance was only about 45.

JA – Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

HW – I think y'all did everything extremely well. It's just hard sometimes to generate interest and you never really know how successful a program will be until you try it.

JA – As an author and library director, you must be an avid reader. Who are some of your favorite authors?

HW – My favorite authors are P.D. James and Anne Perry.

JA – What book have you most recently started to read? What do you think of it so far? Would you recommend it?

HW – I recently finished *Devil Bones*, by Kathy Reichs. I enjoy her books, but don't recommend them for people with squeamish stomachs. I read mysteries – if there's not a dead body by page twenty then I'm moving on.

JA – Ha, good point. Alright, I'll leave you with this one last question. It's a hard one. As a director of a public library, what do you see as the biggest concern facing our public libraries?

HW – I think our biggest obstacle is changing the public's perspective From: libraries have books and DVDs and storytimes for children To: libraries promote literacy; they promote life-long reading; they help students complete homework, improve test scores, find a college or find financial aid options; help people improve their resumes and find jobs; help people start small businesses; help people discover that their great-grandmother was a – pirate; and impact their communities by providing community programs such as teen gaming events, author events and other free programs to the community. Libraries are not a "nice luxury" for a community to have. They are essential to the quality of life, and impact education and economic development. I think if public libraries can achieve this change in perspective, their funding and support will also increase.

Fall Book Recommendations

For this edition of the "What-Are-You-Reading," I decided to ask the staff at the library. Here are their responses.

Emily Carmichael – Acquisitions Assistant

Lady Macbeth by Susan Fraser King. This elegant historical novel turns the story you thought you knew on its ear, making it all too clear why the play is classified as one of Shakespeare's tragedies rather than one of his histories. Fraser King has done her research, and it shows. She also does her readers the courtesy of providing an author's note delineating recorded fact from speculation. According to the historical record, Macbeth and his queen ruled for nearly two decades and were arguably ancient Scotland's most successful and beloved monarchs. Highly recommended to anyone interested in Celtic history, Shakespeare's play, or simply a wonderful story.

Gail Campbell – Adult Services Librarian

Water for Elephants by Sara Gruen. Narrated by David LeDoux and John Randolph Jones.

I recently listened to the audio version, and it is one of the most entertaining recorded books ever! Ninety-something-year-old Jacob Jankowski remembers his time in the circus as a young man during the Great Depression, his friendship with Marlena, the star of the equestrian act, and Rosie, the elephant, who gave them hope. The two different voices of Jacob, as a young man and as an old man, beautifully tell his life's story. Jacob's summer in charge of the menagerie of the Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth is the major turning point of his life. The ending, while totally preposterous, is just perfect. Everyone has fun when the circus comes to town!

Libba Killian – Library Assistant/Reference Department

The Zookeeper's Wife by Diane Ackerman

The true story of how the keepers of the Warsaw Zoo saved hundreds of people from Nazi hands. When Germany invaded Poland, Stuka bombers devastated Warsaw--and the city's zoo along with it. With most of their animals dead, zookeepers Jan and Antonina Żabiński began smuggling Jews into empty cages. Another dozen "guests" hid inside the Żabińskis' villa, emerging after dark for dinner, socializing, and, during rare moments of calm, piano concerts. Jan, active in the Polish resistance, kept ammunition buried in the elephant enclosure and stashed explosives in the animal hospital. Meanwhile, Antonina kept her unusual household afloat, caring for both its human and its animal inhabitants--otters, a badger, hyena pups, lynxes--and keeping alive an atmosphere of play and innocence even as Europe crumbled around her.-From publisher description.

Caleb Robinson – Reference Assistant

The Blind Assassin by Margaret Atwood. This novel incorporates three separate paper trails: a memoir, a science-fiction novel, and a series of newspaper clippings in order to present the life of Mrs. Iris Chase. As the reader works through the disparate documents, they're led through a family history spanning the century. I particularly enjoyed Atwood's exploration of how one documents the past and the near-palpable presence of events we might attempt to conceal or omit. As the three narratives reach their respective endings, the reader is left to fill in the blanks and form their own conclusions about Mrs. Chase and the events of her life.

Bobby Swanay – Interim Library Director

Mutant Message Down Under by Marlo Morgan

It is an unusual book as it started as a self-published work and grew in popularity to become a big hit for HarperCollins. The line between fiction and nonfiction is blurred; the author claims she fictionalized parts of the book to protect the aborigines involved. It had some interesting moments, but it was a familiar kind of story; the author spent time with Australian aborigines and discovered that our Western culture is vastly inferior.

Still, the mutant message contained in the novel did have some interesting points; I think the Real People (as the aborigines called themselves) were probably correct that too much of our way of life is governed by fear. We also have a tendency to try to understand other cultures and belief systems within our own Westernized framework. It's hard to argue with their assessment that we're going to have to find a way to live without killing each other and destroying our planet. Given that she wrote the book in the early 90's, it sounds remarkably contemporary in its global environmental warnings. However, I'm personally not a big fan of either gravy or frosting, which apparently is the primary identifying factors of a westerner mutant (mutants are everyone except for the Real People).



Recent Successes

- On-Going Book Sale is averaging over \$100 a week.
- Summer Reading Program counted nearly 2000 children and 100 teens.
- DVD check-outs have increased 7,000+ in the last year.
- Record year 2007/2008, the library circulated 372,853 items and counted 256,857 visits to the library from patrons.

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