Helping others spurs volunteers

The old adage is at work. If you want help, ask a busy person. Friends members find the time to volunteer for many reasons. Here’s two testimonies.

Amanda Alberts
Co-Recording Secretary

I attend library meetings once a month. As a working mom, it's not easy to find time to give back and volunteer. This feels like an easy way to volunteer that doesn't take a huge time commitment. I like getting out and feeling like I'm helping my library. My husband knows that the first Monday of the month, I will be heading to the library, and he is on kid duty.

Lauren Henderson
Book Sale Co-Chair

I am an elementary school librarian and the mother of a four year old preschooler. My husband and I have lived in Huntington Woods for 10 years and recently I wanted to find a way to give back to the community. When I saw that the Library Friends group was looking for volunteers to help with book sales I saw a great opportunity to give back to the library my family loves. As a school librarian I enjoy helping parents and kids find great books in the children’s area at the used book sales. When we’re not working or spending time at the library, my family loves to play board games.

Top, the Alberts, Cyrus and Vivan
Above, Lauren, Finn and Matt Kish.
Exit West is a 2017 novel by Pakistani writer Mohsin Hamid, who also wrote The Reluctant Fundamentalist. It takes place in an unnamed Middle East city, on the brink of war. Saeed and Nadia meet through a night class. They are attracted to each other and begin to know each other as contemporary young adults, casual users of weed and ‘shrooms, and “always in possession of their phones.” When Nadia, who wears a burqa, tells Saeed she does not pray, he asks her why then does she dress religiously. She responds “So men don’t f*** with me.”

As their personal involvement deepens, so does the uncertain, anxious atmosphere of the city. Daily life becomes militarized: curfews, checkpoints, neighborhoods seized by militants, failures of phone and internet service.

These initial elements of their story would be familiar ground, but they are punctuated by disturbing vignettes. In Australia, a dark-skinned man passes, with tremendous effort, through an open closet door, into the bedroom of a sleeping woman. He stands above her for a moment, aware of her vulnerability, then leaves the room silently through an open window. In Tokyo, a man with an air of potential violence lurks outside a bar as two underdressed, disoriented Filipina teenagers appear behind him, from a doorway always kept locked but now somehow open. It’s clear that they will become his prey.

Realism and magical realism converge when Saeed and Nadia decide they must leave the city, which has become a dangerous and dysfunctional place. They eventually find an “agent” who lets them buy passage for themselves and Saeed’s aged father. In the second half of the book, they make their way via the doors from one place to another, as refugees, their lives are brutish and still at risk. The reader is sustained in this journey along with them by the gift of Hamid’s long, luxurious, individual sentences. They are suffused, gratifyingly often, with emotional responses to physical sensations, and flights of metaphoric virtuosity.

The refugees keep coming, from one war-torn place after another, through the doors which (until they are discovered and sealed by the local residents) allow passage from one untenable existence into another. Nadia and Saeed are in constant peril from nationalists and nativists, and both their individual emotional health and their relationship suffer.

Years pass in a world transformed in every large and small way by the astonishing redistribution of its people, and of their coming to terms, as Nadia and Saeed continue to seek to do, with circumstances in no way close to the expectations they once had for their lives. We are shown (though we already know) that even those who never used a refugee’s door may experience something quite similar.

Exit West is carefully plotted, beautifully written, profound, and both timely and timeless. As so many successful novels do, it introduces us to characters in whom we can see ourselves, and through whom we can better others’ experiences, and our own.

Exit West by Moshin Hamid
231 pages
Riverhead Books, 2017
Review by Alice Marotti

One of the best reasons for going to the library is to find one’s book club selection.

_The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane_ by Lisa See turned out to be a fascinating choice. Li-yun, the tea girl of the title, is an Akha, one of the mountain tribes of southern China. While Akha females count for little in 1988, when the novel begins, members of the tribe were living then much as they had for thousands of years. Lisa See, herself a Chinese-American, embedded her plot in the changes that have come to this tribe in the last 30 years and the part that the production of tea — especially a rare tea called Pu’er — has played in these changes.

The author focuses not only on the relationships between women and the bond between Li-yun and her mother, but on how this tribe’s ancient beliefs of connection between the earth and spirits require obedience to rules for almost every aspect of life. In moving back and forth between Akha and American life, the part played by tea in the changing economy is central to the plot. Differences in assigned male and female roles, as well as young women’s concerns about growing and acceptance, all play essential parts in this story. Not only did the novel keep me immersed, but I was also driven to dig out my atlas and do some research of my own about the geography of China. And reading a second Lisa See book only requires another trip to the library.

_The Tea Girls of Hummingbird Lane_ by Lisa See
371 pages, Scribner 2017

Review by Matt McCall

_Akin_, by Emma Donoghue, is a book about generational differences in family. It is well written and available at your local library.

Everyone else still reading? Good.

_Akin_ is a wonderfully written, charmingly funny, and not-overtly sweet book about a widowed, retired Chemistry professor living in the Upper West Side. Circumstances occur and our main character takes in a nephew once unbeknownst. Everyday situations and events are played out with literary wit and sparkle, involving everything from generational diets, the concept of “screen time” and being lost in the shuffle of ever-evolving technologies. Worded plainly, but with ample description, the author gives even the most mundane realities of the book a charm and sophistication that shows an acumen for storytelling. The bond between the two becomes a joy to read as situations unfold that lead the two back to the South of France, where our main character was born, and evoke imagery and memories of the Nazi occupation from a time long past. The diligence put into creating the locations on paper is something that the author excels at and is a hallmark of Donoghue’s writing.

Ultimately _Akin_ is a generally light-hearted read, unlike that of the author’s best-selling novel, _Room_, it’s a pleasure to see such range from an author. If you’re the type who enjoys scenic literary imagery, dueling character perspectives, and realism in what you read, I would suggest this book wholeheartedly.

_Akin_ by Emma Donoghue
392 pages
Little Brown & Company, 2019
2018/19 Treasurer report

2019 is shaping up to be another very good year financially. In 2018 we decided to reduce our year-to-year carryover with record spending, donations, and contributions.

This year we were successful at balancing income and expenses, with a new, lower level of carryover. Book sales continue to be our largest source of income, closely followed by membership and donations. Major expenses were general library program support, followed by the summer reading program and scholarships.

Friends of the Library Newsletter

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Huntington Woods Library, 26415 Scotia Rd., Huntington Woods, MI, 48070
Constructing tales of city’s architecture

As Jeff Richardson began his work on the book *Guardians of Detroit* two things surprised him. One, that a book on architectural sculpture in Michigan had never been published before and, two, that the book would be much longer than his anticipated 100 pages. In fact, the project changed to just the architectural sculpture of Detroit.

The rapid population growth in Detroit from the late 1800s through the 1920s paralleled the growth in the construction of the city’s skyline. Competition among the industrialists of the time to build the best proved a boon for the architectural sculpture business of the times.

Richardson's November 6 talk at the Huntington Woods Library focused on 10 specific buildings in the city. Along the way he included stories about the ghosts of Whitney Mansion, the naked women sculptures on the Book Building facing St. Aloyious church on Washington Boulevard, the Scott bequest that eventually was used to build the Scott Fountain on Belle Isle as well as other stories.

The beauty of the buildings is magnified as one studies the details of the architectural sculptures on each. Photos taken by Richardson provided a closer look at the sculptures. While most photos were taken with a telephoto lens, Richardson did have some stories about climbing on roofs and up ladders to get a good look at some of the art.

Richardson’s book received an award from the State Historical Society. For his next project he'll work on the architectural sculptures of Michigan. He asked the audience to contribute ideas. He has a website guardiansofdetroit.com for more information.

Jeff Richardson spoke on his book *Guardians of Detroit* on Nov. 6 at the Huntington Woods Library.
Friends of the Library just love a parade

Nestled between the Peace Dove, the Watermelon Camp crew and HWAC Swim Club is that flashy convertible with the Friends of the Huntington Woods Library sign. Toni Brandt sat behind the wheel of the car ready to drive through the parade route in Huntington Woods’ annual civic event celebrating the Fourth of July.

Toni was joined by Anne Hage, Library Director and Judy Schram, Friends member. “Who knew how much fun this could be?” asked Schram. Anne, Toni and Judy tossed red, white and blue Mardi Gras beads to those lined up along the parade route. Hopefully the beads are a reminder not only of the values celebrated on the Fourth but of the importance of one of America's revered institution: the public library.

What’s the big deal? Friends’ book sale

The Friends’ Book Sales are the best deal in the Woods. Huntington Woods’ community of readers still helps provide some of the best books sales in the area with their continued donations to the sale. Some of the hottest items for shoppers continue to be non-fiction, history, biography and new fiction. Thanks to those that have taken the time to supply the Friends with those items.

The sales continue to be the Friends’ biggest fundraiser. The funds raised provide library programs for residents of all ages in the community. If you would like to help all you need is a few hours of time and a willingness to help. Contact Bernadette Borja, bernadette07@gmail.com or Lauren Henderson, Laurenmae@gmail.com if you would like more information.

Book Sale Dates for 2020
Saturday, February 8, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Saturday, June 6, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Saturday, October 3, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Be a good Friend: Volunteer at book sale

Several local residents answered the call by the Friends for help at book sale set-up in November. For some it was an easy response. Two hours of time, and sometimes less, provided needed assistance to make the sale a success.

Conversations at book sale set up cover the gamut. Lifting boxes inspires talk of weight lifting. Sorting books can bring out the old alphabet song as the work of authors is filed in neat order by last name. Then the book talk starts. “I read this.” And often so many of the volunteer sorters have read the books they find donated. Mini book talks ensue as well as reviews.

So why volunteer? First a fondness for the library, second the satisfaction one gets from helping to raise money for the special programs to improve the services, third the funds help purchase items for the library that benefit all users. It’s a chance to meet some neighbors and buy a book or two.

A special thanks to all the folks who find time to volunteer. See you next sale.

Get with the program this winter at the library

Select Winter Programs at the Library
(for more programs check the library website and Huntington Woods newsletter)

Matthew Ball, Boogie Woogie Kid
Wednesday, December 11, 7:00 p.m.
Matthew Ball, a.k.a. The Boogie Woogie Kid, performs a family-friendly program of boogie, blues, ragtime and song favorites from the Swing Era – 20s 30s and 40s. With piano and song hits like Ain’t Misbehavin, In the Mood, When the Saints Go Marchin’ In, Basin Street Blues, You Are My Sunshine, The Entertainer, Bumble Boogie and more! For a preview, visit Matthew online and see why he is called “Michigan’s Best!” www.boogiewoogiekid.com

‘What Did You Say?’ Effective Communication
Wednesday, January 15, 7:00 p.m.
“What Did You Say?” Do you know how to communicate with someone who may not be able to hear you clearly or may have a different type of issue which makes communicating with that person a bit difficult? Jeffrey Astrein will be here to help you learn how to more effectively communicate with your neighbors who might not be able to communicate in a more conventional manner. Join Jeffrey on January 15 for a lively discussion on ways to improve your communication skills.
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Terror in the City of Champions
Wednesday, February 12, 7:00 p.m.
Michigan Author and Journalist Tom Stanton will discuss his New York Times bestseller Terror in the City of Champions. Named as a Notable Book by the Library of Michigan, his book tells a true story about murder, baseball with the Detroit Tigers, boxing with African-American champion Joe Louis, and most of all the nefarious, Klan-like Black Legion. This secret society flourished in Depression-era Detroit and despised African-Americans, Catholics, Jews, immigrants, leftists and union organizers.

‘You only THINK you know Banjo!’
Amazing American Melodies – The Best of the Banjo!
Clawhammer Banjo Stylings by Margie Alkon Skora
Thursday, March 26, 7:00 p.m.
Join us for this fantastic, fun musical event with Huntington Woods Native Margie Alkon Skora! A Melodic Clawhammer banjoist with over 30 years of experience, Margie plays an eclectic mix of contemporary and traditional tunes in this original Americana Folk Style. With beautiful acoustic tones and melodies, Margie puts her unusual spin on incredible music with unique tunings and textures. A regular performer on the Folk Music Scene in suburban Chicago, Margie is a consummate skilled musician, arranging and performing cover music by such composers as Irving Berlin, George and Ira Gershwin, Michael J. Miles and Joe Jencks. In addition to performing, Margie teaches banjo to beginning and intermediate students and organizes and coordinates Open Mic and Musical Showcase events in suburban Chicago.

All of the programs are made possible by the Friends of the Huntington Woods Library. While they are all open to the public, registration is required due to limited seating. Please register via the Library’s web site: click on events, click on calendar, click on the appropriate month, then click on the program and register. www.huntingtonwoodslib.org