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The Librarian

Stonington Free Library PO Box 232 Stonington CT 06378

The Librarian

Newspaper of the Stonington Free Library

Spring 2015 Issue

AN INTERVIEW WITH NICK KEPPLE, NEW PRESIDENT OF THE LIBRARY'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES

By Margaret Victoria, Director

SFL: Let's start with your background.

Mr. Kepple: Well, I was brought up in Stonington. Went to the Borough School. Earned my BA at Assumption College and then a Master's in Political Science at Drew University and started a PhD program in higher education administration at UConn. I started volunteering in Congressman Chris Dodd's Norwich office, and I loved it so much I quit the PhD program and went to work for Chris for 4 years. Then I got interested in technology and technology transfer and went to work for the New England Innovation Group whose mission was to improve state and local governments' use of science and technology. Then I moved to a research firm in North Stonington, and while I was working there, I started law school. After law school I ran for selectman and served two years as selectman, then two years as first selectman. In 1989 the voters of Stonington realized I'd be a better lawyer than first selectman so I started a new career as a lawyer. Later, I joined Jim Morgan in his Pawcatuck law firm and have practiced there for the last 25 years. Three years ago, when the Probate Judge position became available, I decided to pursue the position of Judge of Probate, and I was lucky enough to be chosen by the voters to serve in that position, and have thoroughly enjoyed it.

SFL: What made you volunteer to be President of The Trustees?

Mr. Kepple: Scott Bates asked me, and he knew that my mother had been the Librarian, and so I have a big soft spot in my heart for the Stonington Library. My mother had been a homemaker for a number of years, so she was very proud of getting back into the work force and learning about how to be a librarian. She cut her teeth at the Westerly Library, and then she became Head Librarian here. I spent a lot of time here through my mother's working here. Plus it's a great place, so when Scott asked me I said, "I'm pretty busy, but you can't say no to the Stonington Library." It's such a great place, such a great organization.

SFL: You may not have had time to think about this, but have you developed any fundraising strategies? Do you have any plans for a capital campaign?

Mr. Kepple: I think we're focusing now on sustaining the Annual Appeal, and we've had great success with the Mystery Dinner and some of the other activities. We have a dynamic fundraising group and we've been blessed with incredibly generous and loyal donors over the many years. And as new people discover the Library, you're always gaining new fans and supporters, which is wonderful. We're lucky to have a nice mix of folks we've come to rely on plus new people

who recognize what a gem we have here.

SFL: I think it was last year you put on a four-part seminar dealing with the probate process and estate planning. Anything similar in the works?

Mr. Kepple: The Program Committee is always looking for new activities and the Board's been engaged in a very comprehensive review of what a lot of other libraries our size do; and so from the results of that survey we're exploring all kinds of new initiatives and new programming that we'll be working on over the year.

SFL: How would you define the assets of the Stonington Free Library and how would you rank them?

Mr. Kepple: Well, certainly we have a wonderful staff first and foremost. We recently did a community survey and everyone spoke very glowingly about the warmth and kindness and attentiveness of the staff; so we have a terrific group of people on the staff. I think the board is a terrific asset. I've been involved with a lot of boards and commissions and this is as good a group of people as I've ever been associated with. So, we have some remarkably talented, smart, incredibly hard working people, completely devoted to the Library. I think the staff and the board rank right up there as top assets of the Library. Of course we have this spectacularly beautiful location and a beautiful building and a great collection of materials.

SFL: Talk a little about downstairs, the Children's Library...

Mr. Kepple: What goes on there is a hidden and underappreciated, minor miracle. I don't think most people know that some crazy number like 600 kids participate in the Summer Reading Program. If you asked a bunch of people whether 60 kids participated they'd be surprised at that. So it's astonishing how much interest there is and how this small space is able to get that many kids involved. Another neat thing is they just did the Children's Opera over at the Olde Mistick Village Art Cinemas, and there were two sold out performances. 400 kids went to see an opera. It was a big hit. That's the creative stuff we want to see, where we can take our user community and go other places and utilize other venues and not have to stay here. The board wants to see the library as the linkage between our patrons and cultural events around the area.

SFL: What does the digital future hold for the Stonington Free Library?

Mr. Kepple: One of the things the board is looking at is how we overcome our spatial limitations by being innovative and ingenious



Nick Kepple, new President of the Stonington Free Library's Board of Trustees, wants to use technology to make the Library a portal to the outside world.

about how we can use modern technology to allow the Library to be the portal and the linkage for people here in Stonington to the outside world and all that it has to offer. Historically, libraries have been the repository of books and those books were the link to the outside world. Now we have this whole new medium of technology and the Internet that gives access to resources that are just incredible. So over the next 10 to 100 years, libraries will have to adapt themselves to be the link as much as possible. And I think in the same way that reference librarians and library staff have helped people, I think there are many different roles that libraries can still play and do play. There are libraries that are doing all kinds of interesting things, helping people utilize technology. It doesn't help to have a smart TV if you don't know how to use a smart TV, or Internet access if you don't know how to optimize that. A lot of libraries are doing training and classes and linking people to job opportunities and the like. There's no lack of things a library can do with technology. The challenge is prioritizing things and selecting things that are most responsive to what our membership wants us to be involved with. That will be the challenge. It's also a question of funding. We're not as well funded as some of the other public libraries and we're space-challenged, but you look at libraries that are municipally funded in similar sized communities and the programs they have are remarkable for all age groups. So we're going to see how, despite our space challenges and our financial challenges, we can be clever enough to replicate some of the things they've done. Obviously it's a challenge. We're doing a great job, but there's so much more that can be done. Some of these other libraries have the money that can do a lot. Our budget is about \$460,000; Waterford, which is a community of the same size, has a budget of approximately \$1,000,000. So they have a bigger building, more staff, more services. We will continue the great job we do for the community while we seek new ways to serve our community and create a better understanding of the importance of adequately funding these crucial services.

Bold = Adult Activities 📅 = Pre-registration Required. Please call.

MARCH

- 28

10:30 am

50 to Grow On Celebration Party **NEW** 📅
- 31

10:30 am

Drop In Story Time (Babies – 2) Bunnies will be visiting from Terra Firma Farm
- 11:30 am

Drop In Story Time (Ages 3 – 6) Bunnies will be visiting from Terra Firma Farm
- LAST day for our 50 To Grow On Reading Challenge! Bring in your reading log! And get ready for summer...

APRIL

- 1

Voting OPENS for the 2015 Nutmeg Award Books of the year!
- 10:30 am

Drop in Story Time (Ages 2 – 6) Bunnies will be visiting from Terra Firma Farm
- 6:30 pm

Lullabies at the Library with Bergin O'Malley PJ Story Time **NEW**
- 4

10:30 am

Junior Maker Space with LEGO® bricks
- 7

10:30 am

Drop In Story Time (Babies – 2)
- 11:30 am

Drop In Story Time (Ages 3 – 6)
- 8

10:30 am

Drop in Story Time (Ages 2 – 6)
- 11

10:30 am

Minecraft Junior Maker Space with LEGO® bricks (Ages 6 and up) **NEW**
- 12

5:00 pm

Sunday Evening Lecture Series
“Why Every Asian City Wants to Be a ‘Smart City’” presented by Tony Pelligrini (this program re-scheduled from February, due to the weather)
- 13

Quack, Quack

It's Duckling Week! Our babies should hatch this week!
- 15

6:30 pm

Welcome Spring and come build a birdhouse!
Ages 6+ * Registration opens April 1
- 18

10:30 am

Saturday in Stonington – stop by to see our little quackers
- 20

Green Week Celebration – Drop in and make a craft
- 21

Green Week Celebration – Drop in and make a craft
- 22

Green Week Celebration – Drop in and make a craft
- 23

Green Week Celebration – Drop in and make a craft
- 24

Green Week Celebration – Drop in and make a craft
- 25

Green Week Celebration – Drop in and make a craft
- 6:00 pm

Mystery Dinner Fundraiser – Tickets on sale thru April 15. Seating is limited! Thank you for supporting the Library
- 26

5:00 pm

Merrill House Writers-in-Residence Reading
Damiano Abeni and Moira Egan will read and discuss their work
- 30

LAST day to VOTE for the Nutmeg Awards!!



MAY

- 1

Nutmeg Nominees announced for 2016!
- 2

10:30 pm

Junior Maker Space with LEGO® bricks
- 6

6:30 pm

PJ Story Time **NEW**
- 9

10:30 am

Minecraft Junior Maker Space with LEGO® bricks (Ages 6 and up) **NEW**
- 15

The Nutmeg 2015 WINNERS will be announced! Stop in and see if your favorite won!
- 16

10:30 am

Armed Forces Story Time
- 23

10:30 am

Piglet Story Time and special visit from a Terra Firma Farm piglet **NEW**
- 25

MEMORIAL DAY – Library Closed
- 30

10:30 pm

Saturday in Stonington



Stonington Free Library

Service to All – Young And Old, River to River

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Layout CMB Creative Group

Bookworms

By Maris Frey, Children’s Librarian

Our Tenth Annual Children’s Opera!

Both performances of our annual Children’s Opera were sold out at The Olde Mistick Village Art Cinemas on January 24. Attendees raved about “The Three Little Pigs” presented by The Lollipop Opera Company! We are so grateful to the Library’s opera aficionado, who so generously underwrites this performance for the children in our own and surrounding communities.

Upcoming Program Highlights

Our Winter Drop In Story Times swung right into Spring programs at the beginning of March. Tuesdays at 10:30 are for babies – 2 year olds, 3 – 6 year olds are at 11:30 and Wednesdays at 10:30 are for 2 – 6 year olds.

Our Winter Reading Challenge, 50 to Grow On, has had a second successful season. This early literacy initiative encouraging parents to read aloud to their children is open to all children, ages 7 and younger. It began December 1, 2014 and ends March 31. This program has over 120 enthusiastic families; if you missed it this year, look for it again next December! We end this program with a Celebration Party for the children who participated on Saturday, March 28. Everyone can enjoy donuts and balloons for a job well done!

We began offering a monthly PJ Story Time this winter. They are held the first Wednesday of the month, beginning on February 4 at 6:30 pm and continuing through the spring. As a special treat, Bergin O’Malley will be performing Lullabies at the Library on April 1.

Take Your Child to the Library Day was February 7 and marked an official day to appreciate the special place that libraries play in the lives of children all over the world. We welcomed children with our first Junior Maker Space with LEGO® bricks.



We offer a Minecraft Junior Maker Space on the second Saturdays of the month. Children, ages 6 and older, can drop in and build a world using LEGO® bricks. It is a VERY popular day in the Children’s Room!

To celebrate April school vacation week, we are looking forward to welcoming our baby ducklings! Terra Firma Farms will once again be providing us with an incubator and duck eggs this spring and hatching should coincide with spring vacation. Be sure to check our Facebook page for updates! On April 15 at 6:30 pm, we will have a kids’ workshop, Build a Bird House. The Home Depot will teach the class and provide all materials. We look forward to a great experience. Space is limited and registration is required. The program is open to children ages 6+ and they may require some parental help.

Changes for the Teen Room

We have big changes in our Teen Room! Thanks to a generous grant from the Community Foundation, we now have a Gaming system for teens to use. We have a new Nintendo Wii U system, an assortment of games and a 55” TV to play on! Gaming is available most afternoons from 2:30 – 4:30 during the week and on Saturdays from 1 – 2:30. Stay tuned for updates on this very exciting addition to our programming!

Summer Reading Ahead

We are looking for Teen Volunteers to help us out this summer. This “TV” program gives our volunteers real work experience and they earn community service hours at the same time! The opportunity is open to students entering **seventh** grade or older who would like to work in our air-conditioned Children’s Room for one or two shifts weekly. We are flexible with family vacations, but we do require volunteers to commit to at least 4 weeks between June 23 and August 1. Volunteers must also attend one of two training session in June, dates to be determined. **Strong mental math, computer and social skills** are needed for this position and excellent organizational abilities, a good memory and creativity are appreciated. We hope this is an opportunity for a positive learning experience allowing young teens a chance to learn skills useful to a future paid position. Applications are available on-line at stoningtonfreelibrary.org under Children/Teen - Teen Volunteer Club. Drop off your completed application in the Children’s Room! We begin working on schedules as soon as applications are received.

The themes for the Summer Reading Program are Little Superheroes, Every Hero Has a Story and Unmask. Please contact the Library for more information. We are also accepting donations for our store or basket raffle. If you are looking for ideas, please call the Children’s Room.

Registration opens on June 15!

Laura Jackson, of Highlander Institute, Gives “Thoughtful Thursdays” Talk on “Blended Learning 101: The Future of K-12 Education?”

Laura Jackson, of the Highlander Institute, made the third presentation in the Library’s new “Thoughtful Thursdays” series to a large and intensely engaged audience. She spent a fascinating hour and ten minutes explaining how educators are integrating face-to-face teaching with online learning to increase student control over pace, place, path, and time.

Jackson began with the “Traditional Model” (teacher at the front of the room lecturing), which she contrasted with her “Blended Learning” alternative, which has been developed as a result of a confluence of new technologies: fast wireless internet, affordable devices, and high quality (practically science fiction) software.

The internet enables teacher/student contact and communication at a “never before” level. Affordable devices mean “never before” access to the digital world for literally all students. And high quality software performs “never before” teaching functions that enable students to set individual goals and monitor their success in meeting them.

Ms. Jackson explained how the classroom has been “flipped”, moving the lecture from the classroom to a video format that students watch and respond to at home on their own time — essentially homework assignments via the internet. The classroom becomes a collaborative workshop; the teacher moves from lecturer to coach, going over homework results with small groups or even individuals. The system is student-centric, enabling students to progress at their own pace, access unlimited online content, collaborate with other students, and measure their own progress as they go.

The critical question is: Does Blended Learning work? It’s early in the game, but the answer seems to be that it does. Highlander Institute does its work in Rhode Island where many Blended Learning charter schools are posting significantly higher scores than traditional district schools. Blended Learning Pleasant View Elementary School had the most statistically significant growth on standardized tests in the city of Providence and second highest rate of improvement in the state. California is another state with noteworthy experience in Blended Learning, and results there are equally positive.

Our next “Thoughtful Thursday” program turned into a “Savvy Saturday” with Bryan Bilby and Christine Persche of Appledore Books sharing how they value books and ephemera during our “Appraisal Afternoon”. They were joined by Deborah Norman of Grand & Water Antiques and Chris Jessel, original host of *Antiques Roadshow*, who offered appraisals of small treasures. The turnout was impressive, as seen in the photos, and this program is one we will consider offering again.



It Keeps Getting Curiouser & Curiouser...

Plans for the 7th annual Mystery Dinner are well under way thanks to the tremendous leadership of veteran Event Committee Chairs Anne Fix and Christine Turrentine. This year’s theme will be *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, in honor of the 150th anniversary of the book by Lewis Carroll. The date will be Saturday, April 25th, 2015. This event has grown in popularity over the years, and this year it is sure to dazzle! The 14-member committee is currently working hard to finalize the list of dinner hosts, menu, and decorations.

For those of you who have never attended the event, the evening begins at 6pm with a cocktail party and hors d’oeuvres at the Library where guests will arrive to learn where they will be having dinner for the evening. At 7pm, 15-20 hosts will open their doors to serve an elegant meal to a small group of guests in their home, the menu being determined by the Committee and is centered around the night’s theme. Guests are encouraged to dress according to the theme, as well.

Each year the event sells out, so you are advised to buy your tickets early. Postcards are available at the Library detailing the date tickets will go on sale. An email will also be sent to those on our email list. Admission is \$80 per person and is open to all on a first-come basis. If you have any questions please contact the Library at 860-535-0658.



On Sale at the Library

**Mystery Dinner Cookbook
and Memories
from the last six years**

\$10 each

Please Join Us



*'Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you' join us to celebrate
the 150th anniversary of the Mad Hatter's Party —
with a *Mystery Dinner?**

Saturday, April 25th, 2015



*The Trustees of Stonington Free Library
invite you to celebrate the 150th
anniversary of the publication of*

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

Cocktails at the Library 6-7

Dinner to follow at one of
our mystery homes:
Find out at cocktails
who your host will be!

\$80 PER PERSON

To reserve your place, please send your
check by April 15th to
Stonington Free Library
Post Office Box 232
Stonington, CT 06378

For further information call
860 535-0658