

# Friends of the Westfield Memorial Library Newsletter



Co-Presidents: Suzanne O'Rourke and Jerry Skotnicki

May 2020

Prepared by Judy Musacchia

## MESSAGE FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS



As we step down from our two-year term as Co-Presidents, we would like to thank the board for their support, enthusiasm and hard work. We, as a board, should be proud of our recent accomplishments: state of the art A/V equipment in the Meeting Room, vibrant website and new logo, painted arches in Children's Services, purchase and maintenance of six Little Free Libraries, new upstairs copier and a vital Membership program. These recent endeavors were successful because of the commitment of our membership. In particular, we appreciate the extensive service of our legion of volunteers who drive and sustain our activities throughout the year.

In addition, we maintain our excellent existing programs, including: Museum Passes, Hale Speaker Series, Books on Wheels, Book Club discussions, Met Opera trips, spring Broadway trip, Black History Month program, and scholarship awards to enrollees in library related study.

Of course, our most popular events are the Children's and Teen's Fall Book Sale and the Spring Book Sale. Sadly, many spring events have been cancelled because of CoVid 19.

We look back fondly at the many friends we have worked with in the common goal of supporting our treasured library. We are confident that Marcy and Mike will lead the Friends to a spectacular year in September.

## NOMINEES FOR 2020-2021 FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY BOARD

The Nominating Committee is pleased to announce the new officers for 2020/2021.

Co-Presidents:	Marcy Lechner and Mike Miller
Vice President:	Mary Wislocki
Recording Secretary:	Fran Lemberg
Corresponding Secretary:	Harriet Davidson
Treasurer:	Debbie Bailey
Assistant Treasurer:	Camille Hayden
Advisors:	Jerry Skotnicki & Suzanne O'Rourke

Congratulations to the incoming slate of officers! With such a hard working slate of officers, the Friends is destined to have another successful year!

## 2020 HALE SPEAKER SERIES



The 2020 Hale Speaker Series remains in flux after two of its four scheduled talks already have been postponed.

Westfield's town historian, **Robert Wendel**, was slated to speak in March but his talk was postponed as a result of coronavirus mandates that included closure of the library where the Hale Series takes place.

A May 13 talk by **Judge John Boyle**, a Westfielder with a long career as a lawyer and jurist, also will not be held.

Linnea Rhodes, who heads the Hale committee, said the members must decide how to proceed with the year's schedule that also includes an October 7 talk by artist **Ricardo Roig** and a November 4 speech by former television reporter **Aimee Nuzzo**. No determination, Rhodes said, can be made until current restrictions are lifted and the library staff can deal with the rescheduling of many of its programs.

The Hale Series is hosted by the Friends of the Library and funded through grants from the Anne and Lee Hale Fund and the Thomas Glasser Foundation.

## LITTLE FREE LIBRARIES



The Little Free Libraries, maintained by the Friends of the Westfield Memorial Library, remain available for all Westfield residents. Due to limitations in our ability to restock the libraries, selection may be somewhat more limited than normal, but everyone is invited to "Take a Book, Leave a Book" during the quarantine.

The libraries are located on Walnut Street by the Elm Street Soccer Field, on Clark Street across from the Y, on Palsted Avenue, next to the Westfield Community Center and at the south side train station next to the kiosk. Locations at Mindowaskin and Tamaques Parks are unavailable while the parks are closed. Visits to the Little Libraries should be in compliance with Stay-at-Home restrictions.

## ARCHES IN THE CHILDREN'S SECTION

During this period while the library has been closed due to the coronavirus, the muralist that we contracted to paint the arches in the children's section of the library has been hard at work creating an enchanted forest with birds, flowers and critters abounding!

Caren Frost Olmsted (CFO Designs Inc.) has done a wonderful job designing and painting the colorful area that I am sure children will love. Can't wait for everyone to see it once we are able to return to the library!

## ESSAY CONTEST WINNER



We are pleased to announce the winner of the Friends' Essay Contest is Roosevelt Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> grader, **Diana Houbonova**.

For the topic "What Does Our Town Library Mean to You?", Diana describes a memory of opening the first Harry Potter book in the library and the impact of that moment. "I've changed, but one thing has remained constant in my life--books and the library."

## BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP



The Book Discussion group was not able to meet in April and May. Instead, members compiled a reading list of what we're reading now: a total of 27 good books for our hard times.

See the end of the newsletter for a listing.

# JOIN THE FWML MET OPERA GROUP FOR THE 2020-21 SEASON!!!

*Yes! The Friends sponsor again the Met Opera subscription series for the 2020-21 Season!*



After cancellation of our last three operas of the 2019-20 season the Metropolitan Opera credited our account with the full value of all the tickets we held. Members who renewed the subscription for next season obtained a credit, the others received a refund check from the FWML.

The great news is that a minimum number of people signed up so that we again can hire a bus. Therefore registration for the 2020-21 season continues to be open for any person from Westfield or surrounding communities. Transportation is by charter bus from Westfield to Lincoln Center. Ticket prices range from \$28 (Family Circle) to over \$180 (Orchestra) per performance – your choice! The bus usually leaves at 5:00 p.m. (or 2.5 hours before curtain time) and costs approximately \$38 per performance pending number of participants. Alternatively, you can sign up for one whole subscription and change one or more operas to other ones on the list to enjoy them together with a friend or spouse.

Several people have expressed an interest in sharing a subscription and are waiting for others to join. It is a bargain: you choose the operas you want to see (one or all eight!) – get a 15% discount without any fees attached - and have door to door charter bus transportation. If interested, please contact Ulf for more details. I will pool the interested parties.

If you cannot attend an opera you may exchange the ticket through the Met subscription office or sell it to someone else. The opera group maintains a “Standby List” of people who have expressed an interest in buying tickets for individual operas. If you are interested in participating as subscriber or a Standby and would like more information, please contact Ulf Dolling at 908-347-3563 or [uhdoll@aol.com](mailto:uhdoll@aol.com).

*The program for the 2020-21 season:*

Oct. 7	ROBERT DEVEREUX (Donizetti)
Nov. 18	IL TROVATORE (Verdi)
Dec. 16	IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA (Rossini)
Jan. 27	DIE ZAUBERFLOETE (Mozart)
Mar. 3	CARMEN (Bizet)
Mar. 17	LULU (Berg)
Apr. 28	LA TRAVIATA (Verdi)
May 12	NABUCCO (Verdi)

## Some Good Books for Some Hard Times

The Book Discussion Group has some ideas for what to read while we're sheltering in place. To help you with making a selection, we've included brief blurbs by a group member or Amazon. Happy reading!

**The Address** by Fiona Davis.

**Family Circle**: "Set against the backdrop of NYC's infamous Dakota building—with a thread of mystery that makes it easy to enjoy and hard to put down."

**Born to Run** by Bruce Springsteen.

NPR: "A virtuoso performance"

**American Dirt** by Jeanine Cummins. The author is a great storyteller.

**Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies, and a Conspiracy to Protect Predators** by Ronan Farrow. Amazon: "Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Ronan Farrow exposes serial abusers and a cabal of powerful interests hell-bent on covering up the truth, at any cost."

**The Dutch House** by Ann Patchett.

The house, a magnificent mansion in mainline Philly, is as much of a character as the family who lives there. I felt passionate about the lives of the children as I watched them grow up. At the same time, I detested two of the adults. This is the book that you will think about for weeks because you get so involved with the characters.

**A Fire Sparkling** by Julianne Maclean.

Although it is a WWII book, it is full of twists, turns and surprises. It is also multigenerational.

**The Ghost Line** by Andrew Neil Gray and J. S. Herbison.

Sci-fi novella about a Titanic experience in space.

**The Girl They Left Behind** by Roxanne Veletzos.

Amazon: "A sweeping family saga and love story that offers a vivid and unique portrayal of life in war-torn 1941 Bucharest and life behind the Iron Curtain during the Soviet Union occupation."

**The Gown: A Novel of the Royal Wedding** by Jennifer Robson.

Amazon: "An enthralling historical novel about one of the most famous wedding dresses of the twentieth century—Queen Elizabeth's wedding gown—and the fascinating women who made it."

**The Huntress** by Kate Quinn. (Two recommenders).

**Washington Post**: compulsively readable historical fiction. A powerful novel about unusual women facing sometimes insurmountable odds with grace, grit, love and tenacity.

**The Interestings** by Meg Wolitzer.

A group of teenagers meet at summer camp and bond quickly, even though they are of diverse backgrounds. The novel follows them from camp throughout adulthood, seeing how the course of their lives is affected by their summer experience. Excellent read, surprise ending. Edie Sher

**The Library Book** by Susan Orlean.

Non-fiction. Orlean takes an actual event and delves in the lives of those affected by it in a very vivid manner

**Little Fires Everywhere** by Celeste Ng.

Reese Witherspoon: "To say I love this book is an understatement. It's a deep psychological mystery about the power of motherhood, the intensity of teenage love, and the danger of perfection. It moved me to tears." Now a program streaming on Hulu.

**The Lifeboat** by Charlotte Rogan.

Amazon: "The sinking of an ocean liner leaves a newly married woman battling for survival in this powerful debut novel."

**Long Bright River** by Liz Moore.

Looking for a contemporary story about two sisters, one a policewoman and one a drug addict, set in the gritty streets of Philly? This is it. There are murders, sexual abuse, maternal love, devotion to family and career.

**The Masterpiece** by Fiona Davis.

USA Today: "The Masterpiece continues a winning formula that showcases the stories behind New York City landmarks."

**Midnight in Chernobyl: The Untold Story of the World's Greatest Nuclear Disaster** by Adam Higginbotham.

(recommender says it should get more than 4 stars).

WSJ: "An account that reads almost like the script for a movie. Mr. Higginbotham has captured the terrible drama." A New York Times Best Book of the Year.

**No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know about Domestic Violence Can Kill Us** by Rachel Louis Snyder.

A New York Times Best Book of the Year. Washington Post: "Compulsively readable. . . [A] writing style that's as gripping as good fiction, as intimate as memoir and deeply informed..."

**Olive Again** by Elizabeth Strout.

As in Strout's 2008 Pulitzer Prize winning book, Olive Kitteridge, Olive Again is a series of thirteen interconnected stories featuring Olive two years after the death of her husband. I loved this book for its fascinating characters and for Olive's fierceness as she takes on life's events in her senior years.

**A Piece of the World** by Christine Baker Kline.

The story of the model for painter Andrew Wyeth's "Christina's World".

**Say Nothing. A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland**, by Patrick Radden Keefe. (Two recommenders).

The book is a comprehensive recounting of the Troubles in Northern Ireland that spanned three decades from 1968 to 1998. I came away from it wondering how such a violent period in history has become known by such a mild term, "Troubles", and how Gerry Adams has become such a folk hero. A bit overwritten but otherwise well worth the reading.

**The Secret Sisters** by Joy Calloway.

RT Book Reviews: "A rich drama showcasing the disparity between men and women, rich and poor, on a 19<sup>th</sup> century college campus. The atmosphere of the era feels authentic."

**Small Great Things** by Jodi Picoult.

Fiction that details the lives of a variety of people.

**The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz** by Erik Larson.

Larson's bestselling new book about Churchill and early days of WW2.

**The Winemaker's Wife** by Kristin Harmel.

Amazon: "A moving story set amid the champagne vineyards of northern France during the darkest days of World War II, perfect for fans of Kristin Hannah's The Nightingale."

**Where the Crawdads Sing** by Delia Owens.

Loved it.

**Writers and Lovers** by Lily King.

What do you do when you hear: "You know ... I just find it extraordinary that you think you have something to say," Casey Peabody, 31, perseveres. Despite hardship and tragedy, she works, writes, and is open to life. To read about a woman feeling her way towards her authentic life was perfect for me now.

For other suggestions, take a look at the New York Times list of best books of 2019:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/22/books/review/best-books.html>