

Literacy transforms lives

By Jim Hahn

As the county's premier and award-winning literacy organization, Greater Waukesha Literacy marked its 30th anniversary this year and briefly took time to celebrate the thousands of lives transformed through neighbors helping neighbors to better understand and communicate with the world around them. No doubt when we hear the word "literacy," we think of it as the ability to read. Yet as the world has grown more complex, so have the skills which fall under the literacy banner. Financial literacy, computer literacy, health literacy, civics literacy, and workplace literacy each require mastery of an ever-expanding amount of basic knowledge, which then allows a citizen to be his or her most productive and fulfilled self. Greater Waukesha Literacy helps with all of these needs from the most basic to the most advanced for anyone of any age living or working in the county.

However, we should not lose sight of the imagination- igniting delight that comes from reading simply for personal pleasure. And moreover, the experience of reading a common story with friends who can then discuss the characters, plots, settings, and symbolism that each reader discovered in the well-written pages of a novel like this year's Waukesha Reads selection "To Kill a Mockingbird." As we share our thoughts about Scout and Atticus, justice and equality, we learn how the life experiences of our friends bring new and thoughtful perspectives to our own reading of the text. And our relationships are strengthened through this increased understanding.

Greater Waukesha Literacy is proud to be a partner to the Waukesha Reads program, celebrating its tenth year of communitywide reading. Beyond local library staff members, few others understand the value of reading as deeply as our team of credentialed professionals and dedicated volunteer tutors. And speaking of tutors, we are currently part of an annual statewide campaign to recruit 1,200 new volunteers in the next few weeks. These individuals come from any and all backgrounds and commit to meeting with a learner for one hour each week ... reading together. When a county resident calls to offer their help, we often promise they will "change two lives, one being yours." Interested persons can call Greater Waukesha Literacy at 262547-READ (7323).

It has also been especially exciting this year to have the Waukesha Reads committee expand the program to include readers with lower-level reading skills by incorporating the awardwinning young adult novel "The Watsons Go to Birmingham." The story deals with many of the same themes as "To Kill a Mockingbird," including an interesting divergence of the two stories. The opportunities to use this alternate selection by our volunteers and local educators are many. It is truly never too late or too early to pick up a book and explore the wonder of a new story.

Indeed, reading together begins before we can read ourselves when a parent, teacher, librarian, or other adult reads aloud to us. For more than a dozen years, Greater Waukesha Literacy has promoted reading to children through its annual "Dr. Seuss Birthday Read Aloud" in early March. For one day, dozens of volunteers visit more than 30 county preschool and day care programs to share Dr. Seuss stories with children and provide tools for their families to promote reading together all year long. We work with the local Reach Out and Read program and the Elm Grove Golden Kiwanis Club to reach more than 1,000 children.

Waukesha Reads is a terrific program involving thousands of our neighbors in this annual celebration of reading great stories together. We are fortunate to have a monthlong schedule of activities, lectures, and shows organized by a committee of dedicated local residents who share Greater Waukesha Literacy's belief that literacy truly matters. And this year, we've partnered with America's Pub Quiz to host "To Kill a Mockingbird" Team Trivia during the program. Teams of any number can join us free of charge on Wednesday, Oct. 26 at 7:00 p.m. at the Crest Pub and Grill, 257 W. Broadway, for a fun evening of trivia questions, raffles, and volunteer information to promote the transformative power of reading.

Learn more about all the Waukesha Reads events scheduled through early November at WaukeshaReads.org.

(Jim Hahn is executive director of Greater Waukesha Literacy.)



Waukesha Reads continues events inspired by literacy next week

By Andrea Fencil

Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA — Waukesha Reads, an event in partnership with the National Endowment of the Arts, is celebrating 10 years with “To Kill A Mockingbird” by Harper Lee. Next week begins the third of this year’s Waukesha Reads events.

Those events include:

- The Paradox of Being a Black Police Officer in Today’s Society: Officer Corey Saffold will discuss his experience as a black police officer while police officers are often seen as enemies. This event will be held at 7 p.m. on Tuesday at the Waukesha Public Library, 321 Wisconsin Ave. For more information contact 262-5243682.
- Brown Bag Conversation — Atticus Finch: Public Defender: Waukesha City Attorney Brian Running will discuss the character of Atticus Finch from noon to 1 p.m. on Wednesday at the Frame Park Rotary Building, 1150 Baxter St. For more information call 262-548-0421.
- Comedy Improv with Funny Bone Mafia & Sticky Rhinoceros: Comedy improv teams from Carroll University and Catholic Memorial High School create skits on themes of children and growing up. This event will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Carroll University’s Shattuck Recital Hall in room 107. Carroll University is located on 100 N. East Ave. For more information contact 262-6504887 or email blarson@carrollu.edu.
- Literary Approaches to “To Kill a Mockingbird:” local scholars will discuss insights on the novel at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the Waukesha Public Library. For more information contact 262-5243682.
- An Evening with Mary Badham: Mary Badham will discuss her experiences portraying Scout Finch in the 1962 film “To Kill a Mockingbird” with a Q& A to follow. This event will start with a social hour from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. and the presentation begins at 7 p.m. Friday at Carroll University Campus Center in the Stackner Ballroom, 101 N. East Ave. For more information contact 262-524-3682.
- Ex Fabula Storytelling Workshop: an Ex Fabula coach will help individuals structure, practice and share a true story themed “Loss of Innocence.” This event will be held from 10 a.m. to noon on Oct. 22 at the Waukesha Public Library. For more information contact 414-5303503 or visit exfabula.org/waukeshareads2016.

Upcoming book discussions include:

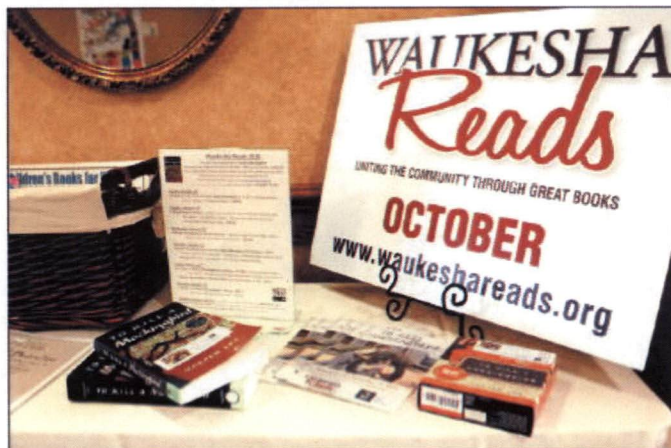
- 4th-6th Grade Book Discussion: children in grades 406 are welcome to the discussion of “The Watsons Go to Birmingham” by Christopher Paul Curtis. This event will be held from 4:15 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. on Monday at the Waukesha Public Library in the Children’s Room. For more information contact 262-524-3692.
- A discussion of “Go Set a Watchman” and “To Kill a Mockingbird” will be held at 7 p.m. Monday at Catholic Memorial High School in the Innovation Wing at 601 E. College Ave. The discussion will be held by local author Mary Ann Noe. For more information contact 262-9934434.
- A discussion of “To Kill a Mockingbird” will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Waukesha Public Library. For more information contact 262-524-3682.
- A teen discussion of “To Kill a Mockingbird” will be held at 3:45 p.m. Thursday at Waukesha Community Arts Project, 320 South St. For more information contact 262-408-5482.
- An intergenerational book discussion of “The Watsons Go to Birmingham” will be held from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Oct. 22 at the Waukesha Public Library in the Children’s Room. Kids grades 4 and up and parents or guardians are invited to participate. For more information contact 262-524-3692.

Email: afencil@conleynet.com



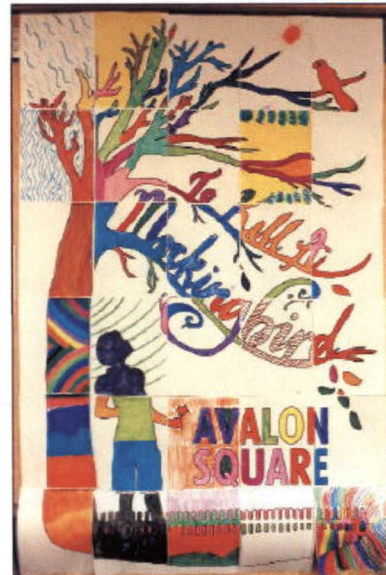
Andrea Fend/ Freeman Staff

Phil Smith and Candace Decker performed their 5th Waukesha Reads cabaret by reading a description of the novel and singing tunes from the era. Through October, Waukesha Reads is holding events such as the lunch and cabaret event held Friday at Avalon Square in Waukesha.



Waukesha Reads is celebrating its 10th year with the novel "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee.

At right: The Avalon Square Mural, pictured, was completed by Avalon Square residents.



A black police officer in today's society

Waukesha Reads guest discusses paradoxical position

By Andrea Fencil

Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA — Waukesha Reads held a program Tuesday entitled “The Paradox of Being a Black Police Officer in Today’s Society,” in which Officer Corey Saffold of the Madison Police Department discussed his position both as a police officer and as a black man in today’s society.

“We have to bring a balance. That’s the paradox of this whole situation, it’s grappling with the idea that African American men, men that look like me, are being murdered. Then coming back and grappling with the idea that there are times where the black community is rioting and protesting in ways that don’t help, and are spewing out rhetoric that’s not true,” Saffold told his audience at the Waukesha Public Library. “So how do I, in opposition, wrestle with these two ideas?”

Saffold discussed his life growing up in Milwaukee and his decision to become a cop, despite his run-ins with the law as a teen.

“Those good decisions, those bad decisions, whatever they may be make me who I am and they will make me a better candidate because I can relate to someone else in that situation as a police officer,” Saffold said.

Every contact Saffold had with police in Milwaukee, he said, was a warranted contact in which the police were extremely professional.

“I’ve only ever had positive experiences with police officers, even as a black man,” Saffold said.

He also addressed police brutality in social media and how it affects the community’s interactions with officers.

“I tell everybody that what you see in social media is a very small percentage, less than 1 percent, of what is really happening out here,” Saffold said. “I would be careful about allowing social media to change you.”

Saffold mentioned teaching about resistance at West High School in Madison where he is the educational resource officer.

Video doesn’t always tell the whole story

“You can’t capture resistance on video. You can take the smallest lady in this room and two of the biggest guys in this room and I could tell those guys to put her hands behind her back and if she resists they won’t be able to do it,” Saffold said. “We are strong at our core. They won’t be able to do it unless they employ other tactics, but you don’t see that on video.”

Saffold encourages individuals who are upset about a particular case to look up the police reports and witness statements that are open to the public before coming to a conclusion about whether the officer was in the wrong or not.

“You don’t see and feel and hear everything that the officer senses and feels,” Saffold continued. “Particularly when you see videos with a lot of officers on one person, trying to subdue one person, you can’t fully capture what that officer is dealing with in that moment.”

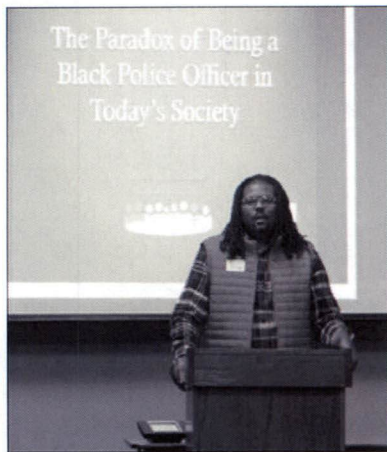
He feels that traumatic events now on social media cause individuals to combine every case in the same category, even if the officer didn’t do anything wrong.

“Social media has created this attitude, this environment that says you should resist the police because the police are harassing people,” he said. “So now when police are trying to do their job and people are being confrontational, it’s as a result of the influence of social media.”

Saffold stressed the importance of considering each situation on a case-by-case basis.

“It’s so easy to be consumed by social media videos, and they will only show you a snippet of what they want you to see,” Saffold cautioned.

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Corey Saffold, Madison Police officer and educational resource officer of West High School in Madison, discusses being a black man in contemporary law enforcement at the Waukesha Public Library Tuesday night.

Andrea Fencl/ Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA
Reads

H-ey, Scout!

Badham

'To Kill a Mockingbird' actress to discuss importance of reading, classic film's significance

Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA — At the end of “To Kill a Mockingbird,” Scout Finch comments how her father’s words rang true as she stood on the neighbor’s porch: “One time he said you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them. Just standing on the Radley porch was enough.”

In many ways, actress Mary Badham stood in the shoes created by writer Harper Lee when she portrayed Scout in the original 1962 movie that went on to win several Academy Awards. Badham was nominated in the Best Actress in a Supporting Role category.

Since playing a girl in the 1930s South who is witness to a trial and a town in crisis, Badham has traveled the world promoting the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel and its themes that remain relevant.

She will be in Waukesha on Friday to share her thoughts with fans and take questions as part of this year’s Waukesha Reads programming. On Tuesday, Badham spoke with The Freeman via phone as she saw her grandchildren get on the bus in North Carolina before driving home to her Virginia farm.

Badham said she will focus on the importance of reading.

“My motto is if you teach someone to learn to love to read, they’ll never be bored, never be lonely, and they’ve always be learning something new,” she said. “And it starts with the parents. They need to read to their kids very early on. My husband read to my daughter before she was even born in the womb and she reads to her kids. It’s a generational thing that gets passed on.”

While Badham says she doesn’t force her children or grandchildren to read certain things because it’s most important that they enjoy the act of reading, there is something to be said for books like “To Kill a Mockingbird” that teach so much.

“Well, I think it speaks to so much that it will always be current,” she said. “This is a not a 1930s black-and-white issue. This is now, today. And unfortunately, because people just don’t seem to learn, I think it will be that way for awhile.

“I don’t think it’s ever been more important than it is right now to read this book and see the significance of it to with what’s going on today on the political scene. We’re talking about the stability of our country and the world.”

See **BADHAM, PAGE 7A**

“... I have said this before, I think this is one of God’s pictures that he wanted made because it spoke right to the needs of the moment and it is still speaking to us today. I think it really helped as far, at that time point, for race relations to change. At least I hope it did.”

— **Mary Badham,**

actress



Gregory Peck embraces Mary Badham, 9, a Birmingham, Alabama acting discovery who plays his daughter in "To Kill a Mockingbird," in March 1963.

Associated Press



Mary Badham, the actress who played Scout in "To Kill a Mockingbird," continues to promote and speak about the book and movie.

Submitted photo



By Katherine Michalets

From Page 1A

Multiple themes

While most people think of the trial of a black man who is accused of sexually assaulting a white woman as the controversial topic dealt with in "To Kill a Mockingbird," Badham also emphasized the story speaks to single-family parenting and parenting in general, as well as addiction and social issues.

"It speaks to parenting in a big way because if our kids can't respect us, they can't obey us. That was a big thing in the book," she said, referring to Scout's strong and noble father, Atticus Finch, the novel's hero, portrayed in the film by Gregory Peck, who won an Academy Award for his performance.

While the world belonged mostly to white men when she was growing up and has since largely changed, Badham said, there are pockets of the country "that haven't gone anywhere and they don't want to change."

"We need to work toward saving our planet and saving our United States," Badham said. "This country, every time I leave and go

to another country and come back, I am so thankful to get back to the United States.

“In my opinion this is one of the best countries on the planet. Yeah, we are not perfect, we are right in there next to great governments. We still have to work through stuff, but I am very thankful and honored to be part of this country and to be a member of this country. And I think you get that through the morals handed down through ‘Mockingbird.’”

Enduring message

When Badham played Scout, she was only 9 years old. The morals portrayed in the movie still ring true to her today.

“I have been doing this for 40 years now that I have been on the road with this. It is amazing how it speaks to people and it is such a book of hope ... I think the people who love this book really want what’s the best for our country. It starts with family and then your community and then the country at large,” Badham said.

While she travels the country and world in promotion of “Mockingbird” and its message, Badham said she finds it a great joy to meet people and to help show them what can still be learned from the novel, especially the message of tolerance and the Judeo-Christian motto of “Do unto others as you’d have done unto you.”

When it comes to the movie, Badham sees it as a force of God.

“I think the casting was just amazing. But because I think if you look at the historical time point when it was made and when it came out, I have said this before, I think this is one of God’s pictures that he wanted made because it spoke right to the needs of the moment and it is still speaking to us today,” she said. “I think it really helped as far, at that time point, for race relations to change. At least I hope it did.”

Despite the 50-plus years since “To Kill a Mockingbird” was released, some still want to ban the book from library shelves, including in St. Louis. Badham said some people make a fuss about the book because of its use of the “n” word, which she said needs to be considered in its historical context.

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If you go

What: "An Evening with Mary Badham"

When: 6 p.m. Friday **Where:** Carroll University Campus Center, second floor, 101 N. East Ave., Waukesha **Info:** Social hour and cash bar

6 p.m. to 7 p.m. Presentation at

7 p.m., followed by Q& A. **Contact:** 262-524-3682

'Mockingbird' music, more on tap as Waukesha Reads enters 4th week

By Andrea Fencel

Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA — Waukesha enters the fourth week of its Waukesha Reads celebration of “To Kill A Mockingbird” with several events planned to tie in with Harper Lee’s classic.

Upcoming events this week include:

- Monday Night Movies: “Ghosts of Mississippi” — Alec Baldwin and Whoopi Goldberg star in this movie about a Mississippi district attorney who struggles to bring a white racist to justice for the 1963 murder of Medgar Evers. The rated-R movie will be held at 6:30 p.m. Monday at the Waukesha Public Library, 321 Wisconsin Ave. Contact 262-5243682 for more information.
- Mockingbird Music, featuring the School District of Waukesha Orchestra: Music reflecting “To Kill a Mockingbird” at 7:00 p.m. Monday. The event will be held at Waukesha South High School, 401 E. Roberta Ave. For more information contact 262-970-3375.
- Interdisciplinary Approaches to “To Kill a Mockingbird”: Local scholars will share their insights on the book in relation to the film. They will also discuss the inequalities of the justice system and segregation. This event will be held at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Waukesha Public Library. Contact 262-524-3682 for more information.
- Mockingbird Poetry & Short Story Slam: This event is open to teens in grades seven to 12 and will be held at Waukesha Public Library in the Teen Zone at 7 p.m. Tuesday. For more information, contact 262-524-3682.
- “To Kill a Mockingbird” Team Trivia: Trivia teams can compete for prizes answering questions related to the novel and film. Attendees can also enter raffles benefitting Greater Waukesha Literacy. This event will be held from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Crest Pub & Grill at 257 W. Broadway. For more information, contact 262-547-7323 or email director@waukeshaliteracy.org.
- “To Kill a Mockingbird”: From Oct. 28 through Nov. 13 individuals can attend the play based on the novel at the Waukesha Civic Theatre, 264 W. Main St. This is a ticketed event with talkbacks after Sunday matinees and weekday shows. For more information, contact 262-547-0708 or visit waukeshacivictheatre.org.
- Book discussions this week include: Teen Discussion of “To Kill a Mockingbird” at the Waukesha Public Library at 7 p.m. Tuesday. For more information contact 262-524-3682.

A discussion of “To Kill a Mockingbird” will be held at 6 p.m. Tuesday at Spring City Wine House located at 336 W. Main St. in Waukesha. Food and beverages will be available for purchase. For more information contact 262-524-3682.

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Actress recounts 'Mockingbird' experience in talk at Carroll

Badham

Badham, who played Scout, says story still relevant today

By Tom Jozwik

Special to The Freeman

WAUKESHA — It seems almost unbelievable that the revered motion picture “To Kill a Mockingbird” generated virtually no interest among studios when its director and producer shopped it around.

“Nobody wanted this picture,” the actress who starred as Scout Finch recalled as the headliner of “An Evening with Mary Badham” at Carroll University Friday evening. “(Director) Bob Mulligan and (producer) Alan Pakula took this picture all over Hollywood and nobody would touch it.”

Well, one studio did: Universal. As a result, the film version of Nelle Harper Lee’s similarly named novel not only made it to the big screen but received three Oscars and five additional Academy Award nominations — including a nomination for Badham as best supporting actress and an Oscar for Gregory Peck as best actor for portraying her father, Atticus.

As part of Waukesha Reads, the monthlong celebration of “To Kill A Mockingbird,” Badham addressed an audience of about 250 in the Stackner Ballroom of Carroll’s Campus Center.

She recalled author Lee (“Miss Nelle”), leading actor Peck (she always called him “Atticus”) and others, as well as commenting on the movie and the book that spawned it, from the Stackner stage. Badham held forth for the better part of two hours, walking around and speaking in an animated fashion. Rather than lecturing, she primarily responded to audience members’ questions, which just kept coming.

Peck, she told her listeners, couldn’t wait to sign on as Atticus after reading the script. She called her late father, a businessman from Birmingham, Ala., “a gentleman with a big heart,” adding that “Atticus was the same way.” Regarding Peck and Brock Peters — who played Tom Robinson, the African-American falsely accused of rape — Badham said, “you could not get better role models.”

See **BADHAM, PAGE 10A**



Academy Award nominee Mary Badham appeared at Carroll University in the Stackner Ballroom on Friday to sign copies of the book “To Kill a Mockingbird” before she spoke to evening guests.

Kenny Yoo/Special to The Freeman

**WAUKESHA
Reads**

From Page 1A

Peck a father figure

Badham depicted Peck as a father figure and said she remained close to him for the rest of his life after “Mockingbird,” well into her adulthood. “Gregory Peck was such a love,” she remarked. “What you see on the screen is what we got.” Badham identified her favorite scene in the movie as the bedtime scene in which Atticus tucks Scout in.

“Bob Mulligan,” Badham said, “was a fabulous director, one of the greatest Hollywood ever had.” And Elmer Bernstein, the film’s composer, “did an incredible job with that score. The film score makes me cry — it makes everybody cry.”

Badham was 9 years old and had absolutely no acting experience when “Mockingbird,” released in 1962, began filming. Cast members, most much older than she, took her under their wings, invited her to visit their homes and play with their children. “I really did love these people and they loved me,” she remembered. “They took such good care of me. We were a family.”

Oddly, Badham didn’t read the novel “To Kill a Mockingbird” until she was an adult. Eventually she became friendly with the book’s author, finding “Miss Nelle” a woman with “a marvelous sense of humor.”

Lee’s book, insisted Badham, is still “very timely” and a book that is “important to read today.” The problems and challenges it depicts, she said, citing racism, drug use and single parenting, are still with us.

Following “Mockingbird,” Badham acted in a couple of poorly remembered movies and a couple of TV series episodes, including the very last installment of “The Twilight Zone.” “Then,” she said, “I retired at the ripe old age of 14.” Now in her 60s, she makes appearances such as the one at Carroll, in the U.S. and abroad, laughingly claiming that she lives “out of suitcase.”

“This book and this film,” Badham commented, not at all surprisingly, “have been near and dear to my heart.”



Mary Badham, who portrayed Scout in the 1962 film “To Kill a Mockingbird,” speaks to audience members in the Stacker Ballroom in the Campus Center building at Carroll University on Friday.

Kenny Yoo/Special to The Freeman

Waukesha Reads program concludes Oct. 27-Nov. 13

Waukesha 1:02 p.m. CDT October 24, 2016



(Photo: Submitted)

The Waukesha Public Library will conclude its Waukesha Reads event, a schedule of reading related that place in October and November, featuring the classic Harper Lee novel "To Kill A Mockingbird."

The program, now in its 10th year, was created in partnership with the National Endowment of the Arts reading and community involvement. The program runs through Nov. 13, with multiple events weekly t Nov. 5. For a complete list of events, go online to WaukeshaReads.org.

Most events will take place at the library, 321 Wisconsin Ave., except where noted. Call 262-524-3682 except where noted) for information on these events:

Events for the period Oct. 27-Nov. 13 include:

- **Bus Trip to Historic Bronzeville (Chicago)**, from 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 27: Trip includes Chicago Freedom Tour 1860-1960 (led by the Bronzeville Historical Society) as well as the Brown Sugar Bakery and lunch in Old Town. Ticket (\$44) in fees, motor coach transportation and a copy of the book. Note: registration was required by Oct. 1; call 262-524-3737 for availability information.
- **"To Kill A Mockingbird" play performance**, Friday, Oct. 28 through Sunday, Nov. 13 at the Waukesha Civic Theatre, 264 W. Main Theater-goers will experience the play based on Harper Lee's classic novel. Talkback sessions planned after Sunday matinees and shows. For details and tickets, call 262-547-0708 or go online to waukeshacivictheatre.org.
- **Ex Fabula StorySlam**, 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 3, at the Waukesha Civic Theatre, 264 W. Main St.: Participants will listen to true, per stories on the theme of "Loss of Innocence." (Audience members are invited to share a story and then take the stage, if selected. (S must be 5 minutes or less, and told without notes or props. For ages 13 and older. For information, call 414-530-3503 or go online to www.exfabula.org/waukeshareads2016.
- **"Music for Us to Enjoy" Mockingbird Cabaret & Writing Contest Awards Ceremony**, Southeast Wisconsin Festival of Books, 1 Saturday, Nov. 5, at University of Wisconsin-Waukesha Commons, C101, 1500 N. University Drive: An original cabaret (inspired by featured book) created and performed by Candace Decker and Phil Smith. Following the cabaret, the Flash Fiction Contest winners categories will be recognized along with Festival Century Fence contest winners. For information, call 262-524-3746.
- **"To Kill a Mockingbird" author panel**, Southeast Wisconsin Festival of Books, 4 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 5, UW-Waukesha, Room N1 N. University Drive: An author panel discusses how the novel and Harper Lee inspired their writing. For information, call 262-524-37
- **Dinner & Movie for "To Kill a Mockingbird,"** 6 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 13, at the Marcus Majestic Cinema, 770 N. Springdale Road, To Brookfield: Event includes a dinner, the award-winning 1962 film and the "Music for Us to Enjoy" Mockingbird Cabaret featuring Can Decker and Phil Smith. Tickets (\$20) and reservations (with payment) required in advance by Nov. 4, and seating is limited. Call 262-524-3694 or email jquinlan@waukesha.lib.wi.us.

Read or Share this story: <http://www.waukeshanow.com/story/news/local/2016/10/24/waukesha-reads-program-concludes-oct-27-nov-13/92489>

Mockingbird Poetry & Short Story Slam

WAUKESHA — The Waukesha Public Library held its Mockingbird Poetry & Short Story Slam on Tuesday as a part of Waukesha Reads. The event was open to teens from 7th grade to 12th grade. The kids started the evening by telling stories from their childhood. They then wrote a poem by having each person say one word to make a sentence. Waukesha Reads is celebrating its 10th year with “To Kill A Mockingbird” by Harper Lee.

Pictured above, Madison Franke (left) discusses the next word that will be in the poem with David Larsen.



Andrea Fencel/ Freeman Staff



Waukesha Reads is celebrating its 10th year with “To Kill A Mockingbird” by Harper Lee.



Marissa Wieser thinks of a word for the poem while Ebony Koller (left) and Jesus Ramos (right) listen.

Something we can all agree on

By Megan McGee

Executive Director of Ex Fabula

I don't know about you, but this election season has given me a headache, and I've felt very tempted to tune it all out. Sure, it's important to be civically involved, but I prefer more nuanced narratives, and right now the conversation is ... less than civil, shall we say. I wish that our electoral process involved more listening, more dialogue, more community building. In fact, I wish it were more like Waukesha Reads.

Unlike the current election cycle, which just seems to divide and frustrate people, Waukesha Reads unites the community through great books, and they've been doing it for the last 10 years. White voting is only open to those 18 and up, Waukesha Reads is more inclusive, with a wide variety of activities for adults, teens, and families. Furthermore, Waukesha Reads is financed by the National Endowment for the Arts rather than special interests. And finally, Waukesha Reads allows for nuanced exploration of a classic book, "To Kill a Mockingbird;" it's basically the opposite of sound bites and talking points.

Ex Fabula has had the pleasure of presenting free storytelling workshops and StorySlams as part of Waukesha Reads for the last three years. We're a local nonprofit that strengthens community bonds through the art of storytelling, and we love creating environments where people can meaningfully connect over true, personal stories, so this partnership has evolved pretty organically.

I could further describe our events, but instead, I'll leave it to a few of the the people who have participated during the past years. One workshop attendee said, "The practical exposure to storytelling techniques was awesome and eye opening." Another exclaimed "Friendly and encouraging [atmosphere made it] easy to take a risk!" As for the StorySlam, here's what one attendee said: "I feel like I can relate more with the people here through our shared experiences." Another remarked, "I heard stories that made me remember my own." Aww, I'm blushing.

One thing I'm especially excited about this year is the theme. Since the book is "To Kill a Mockingbird," we selected the theme "Loss of Innocence," which can go many different ways. I personally could tell stories about cheating on a spelling test, getting serious with my first "real" boyfriend, or having my apartment broken into; in each of those cases, I learned more about how the world actually worked. I can't wait to hear what stories people decide to share!

By the time you read this, we will already have held a storytelling workshop where people will identify, structure, and share their personal stories, but you're not too late to catch the StorySlam, which will take place at 7 p.m. Nov. 3 at the Waukesha Civic Theatre. It's free, and unlike the election, no ID is required; just show up, get comfortable, and listen to true, personal stories. If you have a true personal story to share, you can throw your name in the hat and then take the stage; we'll have a timekeeper giving people cues so they can finish in five minutes, and unlike the recent debates, people are good about respecting the time limit and not speaking over each other.

All in all, attendees will leave feeling more connected and inspired. So, I hope to see you there at the Waukesha Reads StorySlam. Personally, I can't wait to feel that warm sense of community again.

(Megan McGee is executive director of Ex Fabula. She can be reached at Megan@Exfabula.com)



Schedule of this week's events

By Andrea Fencel

Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA — As the 10th year of Waukesha Reads comes to a close, Kori Hall, head of program development and community engagement at the Waukesha Public Library, feels it was a success.

"To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee was this year's featured book. The event, which started Sept. 30, will end Nov. 13 with a dinner and a movie event.

"I think it went really great," Hall said. "This year's Waukesha Reads was probably the most successful based on attendance at events."

A committee, made up of members of the community, chooses the book for Waukesha Reads each year from a list provided by the National Endowment of the Arts. This year's book, "To Kill a Mockingbird," was special to the committee; however, the NEA's Big Reads List changed for 2017. Hall said the NEA removed some classic reads and added some contemporary works.

"The committee might have to do some reading before choosing the book for next year," Hall said.

The committee will meet once in November and again in December and will have the book chosen for 2017 Waukesha Reads by December. As thoughts switch to next year, there are still a few events to be held this week for "To Kill a Mockingbird."

Unfortunately those who haven't yet purchased tickets for the dinner and a movie event on Nov. 13 will be unable to attend as the event has been completely filled. Other upcoming activities can still be attended, including:

- Ex Fabula StorySlam: People are welcome to share personal stories around the theme of "Loss of Innocence" that are five minutes or less in length. The event will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday at Waukesha Civic Theatre, 264 W. Main St. in Waukesha. Stories must be told without notes or props. The event is for people ages 13 and older. Call 414-530-3503 for more information or visit exfabula.org/waukeshareads2016.
- "Music for Us to Enjoy" Mockingbird Cabaret & Writing Contest Awards Ceremony: A cabaret and award ceremony for the Flash Fiction Contest winners will be held at 11:40 a.m. on Saturday. The event will be held at the UW Waukesha Commons, 1500 N. University Drive in Waukesha. For more information call 262-524-3746.
- "To Kill a Mockingbird" Author Panel: a discussion of the novel and how Harper Lee inspired other authors. This event will be held at 4 p.m. on Saturday in room N140 at UW-Waukesha, 1500 N. University Drive. For more information call 262-524-3746.

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'To Kill A Mockingbird' reminds us of racial road traveled and ahead

Waukesha Civic Theatre cast does fine job with American classic

TimeOut Theater Critic

By Julie McHale

WAUKESHA — Harper Lee, a friend and neighbor of Truman Capote, enjoyed a one-book success until she recently published her second novel.

The Waukesha Public Library has used the classic "To Kill A Mockingbird" as its choice for Waukesha Reads. Now we have a chance to see it enacted by a worthy cast at the Waukesha Civic Theatre. It was a worthwhile endeavor on both counts.

The story is told in retrospect by Scout, the daughter of the widowed lawyer Atticus Finch. We move back and forth between past and present perspectives. The stage is cleverly designed to include several residences in the town of Maycomb, Ala., including the houses of the Finches' and that of Boo Radley, a mysterious, reclusive town resident, and several other townsfolk. When a courthouse is required, the set is easily converted. Set designer Michael Talaska has done his magic again.

Tom Robinson, a black farmhand, has been accused of sexually and physically abusing a 19-year-old white woman, Mayella Ewell. Her father, Bob, has brought the charges, claiming to have come upon the act in progress. Atticus defends Robinson, which in 1935 in Alabama, is a very unpopular thing to do. His children, Scout and Jem, have taken some flack for their father's decision.

Before the trial begins, one gets the flavor of daily life in Maycomb. Atticus's children are being raised by Calpurnia, a black nanny. The neighborhood is populated by the reclusive Radleys and the usual gossips and do-gooders, who are always willing to share their free advice, especially when it comes to children's behavior. Atticus does his best to foster empathy and tolerance in his offspring, which is a tough call in a town where prejudice and self-righteousness prevail.

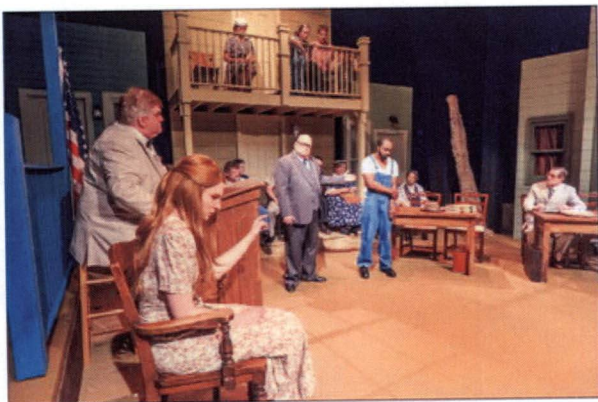
The trial of Robinson and its aftermath are the most dramatic scenes in the play. The testimonies of Bob Ewell, his daughter Mayella, and the accused Robinson are very well-executed by Scott Ebbott, Alyssa Falvey and Nazir Grey, respectively. The prosecutor, Mr. Gilmer, is also very well-rendered by Jim Santelle.

I liked the cameo performance of Lloyd Munson as Sheriff Heck Tate. The three female neighbors, Maudie Atkinson, Mrs. Dubose and Ms. Stephanie, played by Marge Kurtz, Joyce Sponcia and Deanna Strasse respectively, were also credibly portrayed. Cheryl Peterson is a strong Calpurnia as well.

Scout and Dill were not always easily heard, but Grace Munson and Anthony Gotcher are to be commended for creating very distinctive personalities. Scott Ziolecki as Jem and Charlotte Lindstrom as the older Scout, known by the character's name Jean, were both excellent in their portrayals.

Though Gregory Peck is a tough act to follow, Kelly Vance did a good job as Atticus, the lawyer who stood by his principles at the risk of his own life and that of his children, a very difficult call.

The production, under the direction of Rhonda Marie Schmidt, was moving and inspiring. It reminded us of our troubled history and forces us to assess the progress that has been made as well as the long road ahead.



Mayella Ewell, played by Alyssa Falvey, points to Tom Robinson, portrayed by Nazir Grey in "To Kill A Mockingbird." The Waukesha Civic Theatre's production runs through Nov. 13.

Submitted photo



Grace Munson is young Scout in the Waukesha Civic Theatre's "To Kill A Mockingbird."

Submitted photo

Saturday cabaret revisits 'Mockingbird'

Music, message remain relevant today

By Candace Decker

Autumn is my favorite time of year — the leaves, the crisp air and the opportunity to put my “Waukesha Reads!” sign in my front yard. My excitement starts over the summer, once the Waukesha Reads! book selection is announced. This year, “To Kill A Mockingbird,” a favorite in my reading repertoire, was chosen. This is the fifth year I have been given the amazing gift to create a cabaret based on the Waukesha Reads! book selection with my collaborator and accompanist Phil Smith. Once I find out about the book, ideas start to marinate, songs I hear on the radio have more meaning and I open the pages of the book with a highlighter in hand to find words, passages and moments that capture the spirit of the book.

A cabaret is a performance of music and spoken word. My job as the artist is to create a through line for the audience so the essence of the book is captured and brought to life onstage. Performing is such a delight, but I must admit how I relish in the research and creative process. This year we will be returning to the 2016 Southeast Wisconsin Festival of Books on Saturday to perform “Music for us All: A Mockingbird Cabaret.” Our show fits perfectly with the festival theme of “Roots & Branches.”

What I discovered since my journey started over the summer in creating this show is art reflects life; music always tells the truth, and connects us with one another. What I love is the discovery that “To Kill A Mockingbird,” a story set in the 1930s, is still relevant; music from that era holds up a mirror of society today. Songs about poverty, discrimination, forgiveness, and hope for tomorrow are as significant today as they were 80 years ago.

Many songs from the cabaret I am performing were written in the early 1900s, one in particular struck a chord with me, “Nobody” by Bert Williams. I sing it from the point of view of the wife of Tom Robinson, a black man unjustly accused of a terrible crime. Mrs. Robinson finds out her husband has been found guilty and then killed. I use the song as a vessel to show how decisions made by a racist jury change her core being and how she views the world after her experience in a small Alabama town.

“I ain’t never done nothin’ to nobody I ain’t never got nothin’ from nobody, no time And until I get something from somebody, sometime I don’t intend to do nothin’ for nobody, no time” “To Kill A Mockingbird” reminds us that we have the ability and responsibility to do the right thing, even if unpopular. Our choice is the root and the consequences of our choice are the branches that extend out into the world.

My hope is the cabaret for Waukesha Reads! and performance at the 2016 Southeast Wisconsin Festival of Books, will transport the listener into the world of the book and remind us all that we can be better, and if we plant the seeds of justice and right, our roots will spread and our branches will grow; and maybe if we are lucky, a mockingbird will grace our lives.

(Candace Decker is a Waukesha Reads! cabaret artist.)