



Friends of the Takoma Park Maryland Library

School Ties

By Karen MacPherson

The Library's location — between two elementary schools, down the street from a middle school, and near several preschools — makes it an ideal place to create strong connections with students and their teachers.

Each week, we have visits from classes of students who come for a presentation that relates to a particular curriculum unit, and then stay to read and check out books. Our most regular visitors



Students and teachers from two fourth-grade classes respond to the lively presentations Karen MacPherson and Dave Burbank give each Wednesday.



are the **fourth-graders from Piney Branch Elementary**: each Wednesday, two of the six fourth-grade classes come for a presentation that connects to their language arts curriculum, which includes everything from fables to realistic fiction to poetry. (That means we present a program three times — to two classes of fourth-graders at a time — before moving to the next topic.)

We also have connections with the **Piney Branch Elementary fifth-grade students**, who come to do research and check out books for their annual feature article assignment. The **kindergartners from Takoma Park Elementary** usually come over for a program on “Winter,” while we do presentations on authors like Eric Carle and Kevin Henkes for **TPES first- and second-graders**.

We also have **regular visits from nearby preschools**. Young students walk to the Library for a Story Time focused on different topics, from dogs to oceans to Caldecott Medal-winning books.

For middle and high school students, our collaboration is more one-on-one as we offer Student Service Learning (SSL) hours (also called

Friends Are Readers

By Merrill Leffler

Seven years ago in response to several inquiries at the library on the whereabouts of book groups in Takoma Park, the Friends launched its own. Initially it was a modest group of some seven or eight readers — we began with *The Color of Water*, an acclaimed account by former *Washington Post* reporter James McBride's discovery that his mother was Caucasian and Jewish. Since that small beginning, the Reading Group has grown and continued to meet regularly.

We've "logged" over 40 books, from classic American novels such as William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, and *All the King's Men* by Robert Penn Warren, to those on their way to being classic, e.g., Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, to international novels, among them Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, a masterpiece about the complex impacts of colonialism on native African culture, Tomas Lampe-dusa's *The Leopard*, set in Sicily and one of Italy's great modern novels, and Albert Camus' little-known, *The First Man* about the life of a poor French family amidst rising Algerian nationalism.

The Great BIG Books

In 2009, a book group member said off-handedly that we should read the great books, the "large" ones — in size and reputation — that many of us have intended to read but not taken on, or read so long ago we hardly remember them! So the Great Big Book Club was underway!

The group of less than ten decided first on *War and Peace*, Tolstoy's epic of the French invasion of Russia and the lives of several families. We decided to meet four times, every two weeks to enable readers to pace themselves over more than 1000 pages.

We announced the Big Book group having no clue to how many would show up. Twenty-five — 25! — were there on that first evening to participate in the opening discussion, led by Cynthia Martin, University of Maryland Professor of Russian Literature.

Since that beginning, we have continued to explore a Big novel each Fall and Spring. The Friends have continued its support, having a university specialist speak at the opening night for such classics as Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Melville's *Moby Dick*, and Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*.

We're now underway with Nobel Prize winner Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, in which Mann explores themes related to time, music, creativity, and sickness — literal and existential. Discussion continue on Oct. 24 and Nov. 7 and 28 — it's not too late to participate! All are welcome.

On October 30, the Friends Book Group will be discussing the novella *Train Dreams* by Denis Johnson. Join us for either or both!

Find out what both book groups are reading — visit the Friend's website at www.ftpml.org.

Have Fun and Learn Stuff at the Library's Teen Book Blog

By Amanda Cecilia Hayford

Cecilia Hayford is a University of Maryland graduate student currently interning at the Takoma Park Maryland Library.

One of the projects I'm working on is re-vamping the blog "Teen Book Buzz." I've added parody videos (there's a great one on *Harry Potter*), book trailers, author sites, homework resources, and more.

We're also posting to the teen blog more frequently, so there is new content at least twice a week. We know there's not a lot of physical space in the library for book-loving teens, so we're trying to improve our virtual space.

My job is to make it clear that teens are welcome at the library and that we can help them

connect to the information they need for everything from schoolwork to watching cute animal videos (I recommend the pug who sings the Batman theme. YouTube it. You'll thank me.)

Recent blogs on Teen Book Buzz have included:

- *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, a contemporary adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* in vlog form.
- Contrariwise.org, a website that collects photos of literary tattoos.
- A series of links to book-related Halloween costumes.
- *Epic Rap Battles of History*, a web-video series that makes history more interesting with...you guessed it...rap battles between major historical figures.

Who's Who at the Library...

Nic Fontem

By Ellen Robbins

Nic Fontem traces his origins to an illustrious family in the South-West region of Cameroon, but for the last 18 years, he has worked as Technical Services Coordinator at the Takoma Park Library.

While teaching English and French at a secondary following graduation from college, Nic was in charge of the school library — and this introduction sparked his interest in librarianship as a career. He pursued his library work when he was awarded a fellowship to Carleton University in Ottawa, where he also did research on land tenure in sub-Saharan Africa. This work resulted in a published bibliography.

Nic earned his MLS at the University of Maryland, and worked at a law library, NASA Headquarters Library, and Library Systems and Services before he came to the Takoma Park Library in 1994. As a specialist in cataloging and authority control, Nic largely orchestrated our card catalog conversion and transition to an automated library.

Like all Takoma Park Library staff, Nic wears many hats, and finds special gratification in working directly with the public—especially immigrants

who come to our library seeking information on jobs, citizenship, family, culture, and other issues. His own experiences,

and those of friends and family members he has helped have made him well-versed on immigration issues, and his knowledge of French is especially welcome to West Africans who visit the Library. His cordiality and patience are special assets; he once spent several hours finding assistance for a Chinese gentleman who spoke no English.

Nic and his wife and three children reside in Bowie. His children have visited Cameroon—where welcoming relatives presented them with a goat. They were delighted — not realizing it was to become part of a festive dinner! Despite some culture shock, all are eager for a return visit. Nic himself visits often, and speaks of returning to his homeland some day after retirement. In the meantime, we all benefit from his natural helpfulness, tact and graciousness.



Children's Programming

By Karen MacPherson

Winter Programs

Thanks to our wonderful Friends of the Library, we'll be offering a variety of programs this winter. We kick off the season with our popular **Winter Solstice** program the evening of Dec. 20. Funded by the Friends for nearly two decades, our Solstice program annually features drummer Bill Jenkins and the Foggy Bottom Morris Men.

Our special "focus" program for the winter is the **Caldecott Birthday Club**, for which we use the ELMO camera funded by our Friends. We started celebrating the 75th birthday of the Caldecott Medal in September, reading winners from a different decade each month. In November, we'll be looking at winners from the 1960's like *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak and *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats.

Our focus in December is the 1970's, with the books *Freight Train* by Donald Crews and *Strega Nona* by Tomie dePaola. In January, we turn to the 1980's, the decade of *The Polar Express* by

Chris Van Allsburg and *Tuesday* by David Wiesner. In February, it's the 1990's, with books like *Officer Buckle and Gloria* by Peggy Rathman and *Grandfather's Journey* by Allen Say.

We'll continue on to the newest winners in April, celebrating with a big birthday party — complete with cake and lemonade thanks to the Friends for this special birthday bash!

Other winter programs include our third annual **Holiday Sing-A-Long**, led by local musician Wendy Lanxner and her music students and our **Holiday Gift-Making** program, both of which will take place on Saturday, Dec. 8. We'll offer another craft program in February, when we'll gather to make valentines.

We continue to offer **Spanish Circle Time** each Thursday at 10:30 a.m.; and **Petites Chansons**, a French Circle Time program, offered once monthly on a Saturday. For older kids, we have two monthly programs led by staffer Dave Burbank: **Comics Jam** and **Scribbler's Cabal**.

A Few Words from Friends Board Member Ben Frey...

I believe strongly in the importance of public libraries and the sense of community that they help to build. I was introduced to the wonderful world of books by my mother and father — in very different ways. Mom read every day, and read to me every day, both fiction and nonfiction. She viewed it as her duty to inspire my interest in literature and creative writing — and she succeeded. Dad was an avid reader of books, but in direct contrast to Mom, books and periodicals were tools for figuring out how the world worked. While Mom treated books as objects of honor to be carefully used and preserved, Dad was forever folding corners, highlighting sections he wanted to reread and writing notes in margins.

Since then, I have tried to honor both my parents' intentions, and to stay involved with my local public library, the unique, capable and comfortable Takoma Park Maryland Library. I am proud that my appreciation of books and libraries has flourished in my two daughters, both raised here in Takoma Park. From preschool to elementary school, their search for interesting and creative ways to navigate books and stories resulted in frequent and satisfying visits to TPML. As well as a decent share of overdue fees.



*Ben with daughters
Amelia and Samantha.*

When I joined the Board of the FTPML three and a half years ago, I sought a connection with the sincere sense of civic pride that its programs deliver. My family and I have been active participants in (and delighted recipients of) its dynamic blend of booksales, author readings, banned book clubs, youth presentations, comic jams, poetry readings and circle times. The Friends stand ready to contribute to the wealth of know-

edge and community spirit that FTPML helps to inspire. It has been a true honor to serve on the Board of FTPML. With your help, FTPML will continue to build a love for libraries, reading and community for all Takoma Park to enjoy.

Editor's Note: Ben has been a Friends Board Member since March 2009 and is leaving Takoma Park and his community volunteer work in November, 2012. Ben has this to say about his departure, "My wife Barbara was recently offered a challenging and rewarding position with the Peace Corps in Malawi. After laying out any and all criteria on our dining room table, we made the decision to take advantage of this Life opportunity. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. We hope to travel, learn, do good and return. Our favorite books will be making the journey with us."

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"community service hours"). Our biggest SSL opportunity is book reviewing: students schedule an appointment to write reviews about novels, non-fiction books or graphic novels at the Library. Their reviews are posted online on our Books blog by another student who earns SSL hours for helping us with computer tasks.

Many of the programs we do for school groups are aided by a handy piece of equipment — an ELMO document camera — purchased for the Library by the Friends a couple of years ago. With the ELMO, we can project pages of a picture book onto a large screen, allowing everyone in even a crowded Children's Room to clearly see the images. Library Assistant Dave Burbank is an ELMO whiz, zooming in and out to highlight a particular artistic detail as he also uses his theater background to bring a book's text to life.

This collaboration with the schools is fun, great for circulation, and a wonderful way to nurture community connections. As a newly-minted librarian five years ago, I knew about the importance of "collaboration" between public libraries and schools. It was a concept constantly highlighted by professors in my graduate program in library science. Our Library is a great example of how collaboration benefits everyone.

*While we offer these programs for specific school groups, please know that the public is welcome to participate as well. **So if you see a group of school children having fun at a Library program, come on in, sit down, and join in!***

Friends of the Takoma Park Maryland Library
101 Philadelphia Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912
The Library: www.cityoftakomapark.org/library
The Friends: www.ftpml.org