



Friends of the Kankakee Public Library

S P R I N G B O O K S

Friends open new season of exciting programs

Chicago author and book reviewer for New York Times both to appear

There's something for everyone in the fall lineup of programs being sponsored by The Friends of The Kankakee Public Library.

Chicago author Jonathan Eig, who has written a book on Jackie Robinson, the first African-American to play major league ball, will speak at 7 p.m. Sept. 27 on the first floor of the library.

Writer Liesl Schillinger, whose work includes sparkling book reviews for *The New York Times*, will talk about her intriguing career at 7 p.m. Oct. 25. Schillinger is not only an Illinois native, but also the cousin of Rosemary Pistorius of Kankakee.

Batter up!

Eig will speak about two of his books: his newest publication, "Opening Day: The Story of Jackie Robinson's First Season," and *The New York Times* best-selling "Luckiest Man: The Life and Death of Lou Gehrig." That book won the Casey Award for the best baseball book of 2005 and was reviewed in *The New York Times* Book Review as the "first rank of sports biographies."

Copies of both books will be for sale at the library during the event and Eig will be happy to sign them.

The author said he wrote his latest book because he wanted to dispel myths sur-

rounding Robinson. He did this by offering a detailed account of what life was like for the ball player during his first year as a rookie for the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Robinson broke the color barrier April 15, 1947, when he stepped onto the field and baseball has never been the same.

Despite the animosity he endured, Robinson earned the Rookie of the Year Award and made the Dodgers a force to be reckoned with.

Eig graduated from Northwestern University in Chicago with a journalism degree. He worked as a newspaper reporter for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, and the *Dallas Morning News*.

He began work at *Chicago* magazine in 1995 and later became its executive editor. He is now a senior special reporter for the Chicago Bureau of the *Wall Street Journal*.

Literary treat

October's program will offer a rare literary treat when writer Liesl Schillinger visits Kankakee to discuss the experiences of her intriguing writing career. She is best known for writing for impressive publications such as

The New York Times, *The New Yorker*, *The Washington Post*, and *The London Independent on Sunday*.

Recently one of her scintillating book reviews appeared on the cover of *The Time's* book section.

She attended Yale University where she studied comparative literature and wrote for the *Yale Daily News*, created a cartoon strip and acted in student films. She also did freelance literary translation, a hobby which she continues to this day.

She worked at *The New Yorker* from 1988-2005, first as a fact checker, but then as a theatre and dance editor for the magazine's "Going About Town" section. She also spent time living in Moscow in 1993 and working as an editor of the English supplement of *Moscow Magazine*. She also wrote for the *New Republic* magazine there.

She continues to write full-time for a variety of publications.

Her writing style has a sophisticated humor that makes her articles not only informative, but easy, entertaining reads. Her presentation is bound to be as fascinating.

-Sherry Merry

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Stay tuned for information on other Friends' programs being planned for the coming season..



Summer book sales story of success

Funds will help sponsor new season of top-notch programs at local library

The two book sales held this summer by The Friends of the Kankakee Public Library had happy endings.

They put more than \$1,300 into the treasury's coffers to help Friends sponsor top-notch programs at the library during the coming season.

According to Evie Torchia, who helped supervise the events, the excellent turnout for the Strawberry Festival last June helped ensure plenty of enthusiastic buyers for the first sale.

"It was the best crowd we'd ever had," she said. "The enthusiasm seems as good as ever for interest in buying used books."



She said customers were particularly responsive to the specials offered as the festival drew to a close. And who could blame them? Friends started selling books for a buck a bag and then during

the last half-hour gave people free books.

The "cream of the crop" books left over were taken to a second sale held in July at the local Farmers' Market. It gave customers some one-stop shopping -- a place to buy healthy food, support area growers, and books to stimulate their minds.

Evie said the books that don't sell aren't wasted. They are taken to local resale shops and nursing homes. This year there was a call for some at the local correctional center. "We hadn't considered that some of the prisoners would be enthusiastic about used textbooks, but they are," she said.

Usually Friends don't take donations of textbooks since they are usually out of date, but the group is willing to reconsider if there is a need for them. The book sales are held to earn money, but members also feel they promote the importance and joys of reading.


It takes about 20 volunteers to run each sale. Some sort books that are donated, while others transport books, set up the booths, tend to customers and help cleanup. Each is highly appreciated.

All the volunteers are special people," she said. "Each one performs a unique service."

The Community Arts Council, which sponsored the Strawberry Festival at Gov. Small Memorial Park in Kankakee, also is planning its annual Fall Art Stroll Oct. 7 in downtown Kankakee. Friends will participate by holding another book sale. Come by and stock up on books to enjoy as you curl up in front of the fireplace during those cold winter months.

— Sherry Merry

Photos on pages 2 and 3 courtesy of Eric Merry.



Friends of the Kankakee Public Library
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Former first lady pens historical book

Books can keep history alive in more ways than one. The Friends of The Kankakee Public Library proved this July 28 when it helped sponsor a special book-signing.

It all came about when former governor George Ryan and his wife, Lura Lynn, visited the Kankakee library to sign the book co-authored by Lura Lynn and historical writer Dan Monroe, when she was first lady of Illinois.

The book is not only a record of the lives of former governors and their families, it was written to help keep the mansion they lived in refurbished and preserved for history.

The book is called “At Home With Illinois Governors: A Social History Of The Illinois Executive Mansion 1855-2003” and proceeds from its sale will benefit the Illinois Executive Mansion Association. The IEMA was founded in the early 1970s as a non-profit organization to raise funds to furnish the mansion’s public rooms with items and artifacts that enhance their beauty and historical significance. The first lady is always honorary chairman of the association and can make appointments to its board. The Ryans had 5,000 of the \$50 books printed before they left office.

The special copies available at the event were signed by three governors - Dan Walker, Jim Thompson and Ryan - in addition to Lura Lynn.

During the event, the Ryans talked about the importance of the book and shared memories of their own stay at the mansion. Lura Lynn said members of the sprawling Ryan family, made up of six married children and more than a dozen grandchildren, were always at ease there. “From the time they walked in they made it their home,” she said, sometimes even pitching in to help the staff give tours. The main dining room

table seats 35, George added, but their family usually filled it up.

She described the mansion as “a treasure.” It is the third oldest consecutively lived in governor’s mansion in the country, she said, and this is the first history of its inhabitants written since 1855. It offers many details about the first families that are little known to Illinois inhabitants. Three of those governors, Len Small, Samuel Shapiro and Ryan, all came from Kankakee.

Kay Smith, artist laureate of Illinois, has enriched the book with beautiful water colors of the mansion and its gardens that reflect accurate details of the building. Her artwork comple-

ments the black and white photos from the state’s historical archives.

George said the mansion has played an important role in Springfield politics as a home, a place to entertain dignitaries and a political tool. Governors have often brought legislators to the warmth of the house when they wished to persuade them to support their programs. “The deal for the Illi-

nois First program was made in the main dining room,” he said.

Ryan said the mansion was always a reminder to him of the importance of his office. “I would drive through those gates and think to myself, ‘I really live here.’ ”

After the talk, those attending had books signed and enjoyed refreshments provided by the Junior League of Kankakee County, a sponsor of the event. Directing the event were Mary Jo Johnston, program chairman for The Friends, and Anne Miller. Other sponsors were the library and the Kankakee County Museum along with the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop of Chicago.

—Sherry Merry





Book reviews from Friends

Don't overlook these 'Little Gems'

Two Books by Women - One American, the Other an English "Lady"

Eric and Sherry Merry

The First Salute, Barbara W. Tuchman (1988). Barbara Tuchman (a double Pulitzer Prize recipient) highlights the emergence of the infant American nation in 1776 onto the international stage by a singular event- literally the first salute. As the American ship Andrew Doria, flying the flag of the Continental Congress, approached the Dutch-controlled harbor of St. Eustatius, the captain followed the tradition of firing a greeting cannon. This was answered by the gun of the fort as a sign of recognition of a sovereign power and flag. The sign of recognition was not lost on the world's maritime powers, particularly the English and French as well as the Dutch themselves. America had arrived. Ms. Tuchman goes on to tell the intriguing story of how The First Salute forever changed the world.

The Six Wives of Henry VIII, Antonia Fraser (1992). A hackneyed title for a hackneyed subject? Absolutely not. This is a profound story written by an author who rescues these ladies from their stereotype images. It's the story of six very different women, some ambitious, some naïve, who had one thing in common - keeping the affections of King Henry VIII and providing him with a male heir. It's a masterly study of real living women by a lady who has her own British aristocrat connections. Lady Antonia Fraser is a quality historical author whose book, "*Marie Antoinette: The Journey*," was the basis for the popular 2006 film, "*Marie Antoinette: The Journey*," directed by Sofia Coppola.

Two Related Books

Kay Green

The Worst Hard Time, Timothy Egan (2006). I think I first heard of the Dust Bowl when I read Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* in high school. Then I developed a deeper feel for the actual conditions of that period after reading Karen Hesse's 1998 Newbery Award-winning book, *Out of the Dust*. But I didn't truly understand the magnitude of this environmental disaster until I read *The Worst Hard Time*, the 2007 winner of the National Book Award for

non-fiction. I erroneously believed that the Dust Bowl primarily impacted Oklahoma, when in fact the Dust Bowl covered about 100 million acres, including much of Kansas and parts of Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. I also thought that the drought lasted a year or two when in actuality it lasted through most of the 1930's. Where Steinbeck gave voice to those who fled these unbearable conditions, Egan like Hesse has given voice to those who stayed and survived. He has meticulously researched this era and incorporated into his spell-binding narrative the compelling and in some cases, unimaginable, stories of real people who are now in their 80's and 90's. As Walter Cronkite said, *This is can't-put-down history*.

After finishing Egan's remarkable book, I decided to re-read *Out of the Dust* and discovered that the trials faced by this 15-year-old narrator were even more heart wrenching now that I had a more thorough understanding of the times. I also discovered that this unforgettable story, written in verse form, is historically accurate. I guarantee that after reading these two works, you'll no longer complain about some of life's little irritants - at least for awhile.

A POET FRIEND Design

I pour a coating of salt on the table
and make a circle in it with my finger.
This is the cycle of life
I say to no one.
This is the wheel of fortune,
the Artic Circle.
This is the ring of Kerry
and the white rose of Tralee
I say to the ghosts of my family,
the dead fathers,
the aunt who drowned,
my unborn brothers and sisters,
my unborn children.
This is the sun with its glittering spokes
and the bitter moon.
This is the absolute circle of geometry
I say to the crack in the wall,
to the birds who cross the window.
This is the wheel I just invented
to roll through the rest of my life
I say
touching my finger to my tongue.



-Billy Collins

from *The Art of Drowning* (1995)
included in *Sailing Alone Around the Room:
New and Selected Poems* (2001)

Director's comments

Kankakee library reflects 'world class' community

In our one hundred-plus year history we've had our share of bad times and good times. The last four years have been a time of tremendous growth and accomplishment for our Library.

This summer, our library was recognized at the American Library Association's annual conference with a "Best in Show" award for our website. We were also one of 15 finalists for the SirsiDynix "Building Better Communities" award. Some of the other finalists included the Smithsonian in Washington D.C., the Shanghai Library in China, and The World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland.

The winners of the "Best in Show" awards are actually announced in advance of the conference, so I knew getting on the plane that our library had been selected from the nearly 500 entries submitted by libraries across North America. The "Building Better Communities"

award was a secret.

On the day of the announcement, my mind raced as I sat waiting in the Convention Center in Washington, D.C. The other finalists were all much larger institutions, and if a person was not familiar with Kankakee, they could easily assume that we, too, were a large metropolitan library serving a well educated and economically affluent community.

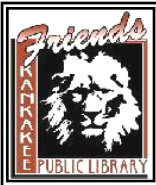
It really is a matter of perception. Our community celebrates diversity and innovation; it values hard work and education. That's a recipe for prosperity. While we were not selected to be one of the winners for the "Building Better Communities" award, I still feel like we are a winner. We were a finalist for an international award; we are a world class library. A public library is a reflection of its community; Kankakee is a world class community.

— Cindy Fuerst, library director

NEW @ your library

DVDs are becoming increasingly popular with our users. Here is a look at some of the newer DVDs that you may not find at the local video store. Check-out what KPL has to offer:

- ! DVD BEO 2005 **Beowulf & Grendel**. A modern retelling of *Beowulf*, the oldest epic poem in the English language. Gerard Butler (*The Phantom of the Opera*) brings the right balance of physicality and world-weariness as the Swedish hero Beowulf, who travels to Denmark to fight the monstrous troll Grendel (Icelandic superstar Ignvar Sigurdsson), which has been plaguing the house of King Hrothgar (Stellan Skarsgård).
- ! DVD SUP 2006 **The Amazing Story of Superman**. Narrated by star Kevin Spacey, *The Amazing Story of Superman* is an exhaustive, nearly two-hour documentary covering over 60 years of the Man of Steel.
- ! DVD TRI 2006 **Tristram Shandy : a Cock & Bull Story**. A rollicking, inventive adaptation of the notoriously unfilmable British comic novel The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, written by Laurence Sterne. Crammed with literary jokes and dark humor, and aided by stellar performances by Jeremy Northam, Rob Brydon and Naomie Harris, Shandy's warped tales reveal far more about himself than any conventional autobiography.
- ! DVD 646.7BEA 2006 **The Beauty Academy of Kabul**. A documentary following American women (some of whom emigrated from Afghanistan in the early 1980s) who return to the capital city of Kabul to open an American-style school for beauticians. Some of their students are women who maintained "underground" beauty salons while the city was under Taliban control.



BOOKMARKS

NEWSLETTER
OF THE FRIENDS

FRIENDS OF THE KANKAKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY

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For printing this newsletter as a
gift to Friends



FRIENDS EVENTS *Fall 2007*

SEPTEMBER

.. 9-19 Wednesday,
5:00p.m. Friends Board
Meeting @the library

.. 9-27 Thursday, 7:00p.m.
Chicago award winning au-
thor, Jonathan Eig will
speak on his two recent
books, Opening Day: The
Story of Jackie Robinson's
First Season and Luckiest
Man: The Life and Death of
Lou Gehrig, winner of the
Casey Award for the best
baseball book of 2005.

*Just in time for the World
Series this fall!*



OCTOBER

.. 10-17 Wednesday-
Friends Board
Meeting, 5:00p.m.
@the library

.. 10-7 Sunday, Community
Arts Council Downtown
Art Stroll, North Schuyler,
Majestic Theatre. Friends
Used Book Sale. Volun-
teers, please call Evie
Torchia if you can help.

.. 10-25 Thursday, 7:00p.m.:
Liesl Schillinger, regular
contributor to the *New
York Times Book Review*,
will present a program on

writing and books. Do not
miss this special program.
A "rare literary treat,"
indeed.

*Please join us on the 1st
floor @the library for the
Jonathan Eig and Liesl
Schillinger programs; all
programs are free and
open to the public.*

(for more details, please see page 1)

NOVEMBER

.. 11- Friends Board
Meeting TBA

.. 11- Friends programs for the
coming months will be
announced at a later date.

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