

# Friends of The Kankakee Public Library

S  
K  
R  
A  
M  
K  
B  
O  
B  
B

## A letter from the President . . .

**W**hat a year it has been for The Friends of the Kankakee Public Library!

When members met for their 2007 Annual Meeting April 7, the Membership Committee reported that Friends now has 142 members. This is up from 119 at this time last year. It's exciting that we continue to grow and are ever more able to bring new and varied programs to the community. Kankakee rocks! And we are the movers and shakers.

Cindy Fuerst, director of the library spoke to the group. She stated her appreciation for all that Friends do for the community, especially our programs, and our support of gifts.

If you attended the Harriet Tubman program, you may have noticed the

speaker wore a wireless clip microphone purchased by the Friends for programs.

Steve Bertrand, the library's assistant director, introduced the Friends' new logo; it is the library's logo with "Friends" across the top. He also said it will be possible for Friends to have this new logo put on merchandise—shirts, tote bags, etc. Go to main page of the library's website and click on the bottom of the menu list.

In addition to the ability to "shop" online Steve noted new online databases, including Auto Repair Reference Center, Oxford African

American Study Center, and Sanborn Maps.

Patrons also can click onto the AskAway link on the main page—an online reference chat service. And the new TeenZone site is available to teens.

Mary Johnston spoke about "Little Gems of Books and Authors You May Have Overlooked." A mainstay for Friends' readers and library patrons, it too is on the website.

New officers were elected. See the new Board of Directors on Page 2.

All in all, this past year was a most productive one, so renew your Friends' membership, attend dynamic Friends' programs, and come to the Friends Book Sale. See Page 3.

— Linda Bishop,  
Friends President



**M**embers of The Friends of the Library are proud of the quality programs they have been able to bring to the community this year. Kudos go to Mary Jo Johnston, program chairman. Kathryn Harris' program on Harriet Tubman April 26 ended the year, which also included:

- Elizabeth Berg, an author of 17 works of fiction, who has won numerous awards.
- Stuart Dybek, poet and author, whose book "I Sailed with Magellan," has been adapted for the stage and will premiere June 18 at the Biograph Theater in Chicago.
- Walt Harrington, head of the professor of journalism at the University of Illi-

nois, who speaks regularly about the reporting and writing techniques of literary journalism.

- Other programs were: "Calling All Book Clubs," the "Art Excursions" lecture on the King Tut exhibit, and a talk by local cartoonist Don Kramer.

Friends is making plans for a new series next September. Ideas include a Newbury Medalist, two Chicago area authors, and a perennial favorite, "Art Excursions."

Several of you have made some excellent suggestions, and we invite others to send ideas for programs.

Contact Mary Jo Johnston, at 815/939-4278, or m.johnston2004@comcast.net.

# Harriet Tubman visits Kankakee

*'Moses' of Underground Railroad tells her story at Friends' program*

*"I never ran my train off the track and never lost a passenger. All who traveled with me got to freedom."*



Those were the words of Harriet Tubman, nicknamed the "Moses of her people" for her incredible work with the Underground Railroad. She was among the "conductors" who helped thousands of slaves flee to freedom during the years before the Civil War.

She visited the Kankakee Public Library April 26 by way of Kathryn M. Harris of Springfield, a longtime librarian who portrayed Tubman

during a talk about her work on the railroad. The program was sponsored by the Friends of the Kankakee Public Library.

Dressed in a drab coat, with a bandana on her head, a satchel on her back and a walking stick in her hand, Harris' presentation brought Tubman to life. She also answered questions just as Tubman would have answered them more than 125 years ago.

Harris, currently library services director at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, has spent years of research in order to present not just the facts about Tubman and the turbulent times she lived in, but also the spirit of the plucky, courageous woman.

## **Secret network**

Tubman described the Underground Railroad as a network of people and places dedicated to helping slaves escape to freedom. The secret network was dangerous because it was illegal. It was operated by both black and white people, including free blacks and white abolitionists and sympathizers. They risked loss of property, fines and imprisonment, but Tubman said, "They believed slavery was wrong. They believed families should not be separated. They believed no man should own another."

So they helped slaves travel from station to station on their journey to either free cities in the north or Canada. "A station could be a barge, a cellar, an attic, the back of a wagon or the forest," she said. Along the route slaves faced hunger, disease, exhaustion and the constant fear of discovery, but whenever word went

out that a station master, such as Tubman, was coming, there were always people waiting. Freedom was worth every hardship.

Tubman was born into slavery at a plantation in Dorchester County, Md., around 1820, but escaped through the underground railroad in 1849.

## **Becoming a conductor**

She lived in the free city of Philadelphia and worked with an anti-slavery group. Known for her tenacity and sharp wit, she was asked to become a conductor and worked with the railroad from 1851 until the war started in 1861. She made 13 trips to the south that helped free 300 slaves, including her brothers and parents. Tubman always remained fearless. "I didn't feel danger. The hand of the Good Lord was upon me," she said.

During the war she served as a nurse, a spy and scout, sometimes leading black soldiers on raids. When the war ended in 1865 she worked for the Freed Man's Bureau, a federal agency formed to help slaves adjust to freedom. "They was taught ... to be their own masters, but the best thing the bureau did was to teach them to read and write," she said.

She settled in Auburn, N.Y., with her parents and opened a home for aged and indigent former slaves. She later worked with the Suffrage Movement.

She died at age of 90 in 1913. Her home, owned by the AME Zion Church, is a New York Historic Site .

— *Submitted by Sherry Merry*

## Friends of the Kankakee Public Library BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President. . . . . Linda Bishop  
Vice President. . . . . Evie Torchia  
Secretary. . . . . Burma Mathews  
Treasurer . . . . . Rob Costanza  
Membership. . . . . Vickie Romein  
Program. . . . . Mary Jo Johnston  
Publicity. . . . . Toby Olszewski  
Members-at-Large. . . . . Harold Berg,  
Carol Bowman, and  
Sherry Merry, Assistant to the Editor  
*BOOKMARKS* Editor. . . . Mary Costanza

# Book sale at annual fest fun for all

**Attention please! It's coming!**

**In fact it's almost here!**

It's The Friends of the Kankakee Public Library Annual Book Sale with a tantalizing assortment of inexpensive paperbacks, hardbacks and used AV material to help you while away those lazy summer days.

The sale will be held in conjunction with the Strawberry Festival sponsored each June by the Community Arts Council of Kankakee County.

This year's event will be 11 a.m.-4 p.m. June 10 on the patio of the Civic Auditorium at Gov. Small Memorial Park in Kankakee. And when you're done browsing among the rows of books, enjoy all sorts of entertainment, food with a delicious strawberry theme and all types of arts and crafts booths.

The book sale is the main fundraiser for the Friends. It helps purchase things that are on the Kankakee Public Library's "wish list," and also sponsors first-rate programs at the library. Last year's speakers included well-known authors, a poet, a journalist, even a presentation on Harriet Tubman. Next year's programs are going to be just as exciting but funds are really needed to present them.

Lots of gently-used non-fiction and fiction books and videos for adults and children are needed. No encyclopedias, textbooks, or magazines, please. Drop books off at the sale or take them to Johnston Hultsch Birkenbeil Bright Architects at 154 E. Court St. in Kankakee.

## **Sale needs volunteers**

According to Evie Torchia, chair of the sale, 20-25 volunteers also are needed for the event. They include:

- ! People to spend about half an hour transporting books from the architects' office to the Civic – vans and trucks are appreciated;
- ! Sorters to work the day of the sale organizing

books;

- ! Able-bodied volunteers who can spend a half-hour setting up the table;
- ! Sellers to work one-hour intervals manning the sale table and helping customers;
- ! Helpers to pack up unsold books and help with cleanup.

Call Evie at 932-4062 if you would like to support the Friends – and our beautiful new library – with a little volunteer time. We guarantee you'll also have a great time. The Strawberry Festival, in its 34th year, is going to have something for everyone.

According to CAC president Janice Miller, the event is held to stimulate interest and participation in the arts. This year it has been expanded to be more inclusive of the community so churches, civic groups and schools have been invited to provide entertainment or display booths.



## **Fun at the fest**

There will be live entertainment 11:30 a.m.-4 p.m. including dancing, gospel groups, the Kings of Dixieland jazz band, a saxophone quartet, the Something Special Singers and the Palmer Tolly Piano Ensemble. Kids will love the puppet show, having their face painted or participating in the other activities for small fry.

Arts and crafts will be displayed, demonstrated and sold. Among them will be blown glass, oil and watercolor paintings, needlework, porcelain painting, plants and photography. The food? Oooooo-la-la. There will be strawberries everywhere – by the quart, in ice cream, on top of shortcake and covered in chocolate. – in addition to pork chop sandwiches.

Be among the 1,200 to 1,500 people expected to visit the festival. Buy plenty of books, eat your fill, see the booths, hear the entertainment and have a wonderful afternoon.

!



## OUR READERS WRITE

### Kurt Vonnegut

*The passing of an American literary giant*

**K**urt Vonnegut, one of my favorite authors of all time, died April 12, at the ripe young age of 84.

The next evening I was in Minneapolis where I was introduced to a woman about my age. We had nothing in common that I could tell at first glance, but when she asked if I had ever read Kurt Vonnegut we both mourned. She wondered if I had read that day's *New York Times*.

When I returned home I retrieved the Times and I've read it numerous times since.

In addition to a full-page obituary, there was also an editorial written by Verlyn Klinkenborg. I initially wanted to write about Mr. Vonnegut in this newsletter, but I couldn't possibly come close to what Mr. Klinkenborg had to say:

*If you read Kurt Vonnegut when you were young – read all there was of him, book after book as fast as you could the way so many of us did – you probably set him aside long ago. That's the way it goes with writers we love when we're young. It's almost as though their books absorbed some part of our DNA while we were reading them, and rereading them means revisiting a version of ourselves we may no longer remember or trust.*

*Not that Vonnegut is mainly for the young. I'm sure there are plenty of people who think he is entirely unsuitable for readers under the age of disillusionment. But the time to read Vonnegut is just when you begin to suspect that the world is not what it appears to be. He is the indispensable footnote to everything everyone is trying to teach you, the footnote that pulls the rug out from under the established truths being so firmly avowed in the body of the text.*

*He is not only entertaining, he is electrocuting. You read him with enormous pleasure because he makes your hair stand on end. He says not only what no one is saying, but also what – as a mild young person – you know it is forbidden to say. No one nourishes the skepticism of the young like Vonnegut. In his world, decency is likelier to be rooted in skepticism than it is in the ardor of fate.*

*So you get older, and it's been 20 or 30 years since you last read "Player Piano" or "Cat's Cradle" or "Slaughterhouse-Five." Vonnegut is not, now, somehow serious enough. You've entered that time of life when every hard truth has to be qualified by the sense of what you stand to lose. "It's not that simple," you find yourself saying a lot, and the train of thought that unfolds in your mind as you speak those words reeks of desperation.*

*And yet, somehow, the world seems more and more to have been written by Vonnegut and your life is now a footnote. Perhaps it is time to go back and revisit that earlier self, the one who seemed, for awhile, so interwoven in the pages of those old paperbacks.*

And that is exactly what I intend to do.

—Submitted by Mary Jo Johnston

## A POET FRIEND

### Zinnias

Gala, holding on  
to their harvest and wine  
colors  
with what seems  
bravura  
persistence:

We would  
scarcely present  
bouquets of them  
to Nureyev  
or Leontyne  
Price:

Yet isn't  
their hardy élan one way  
of exclaiming  
More More More  
as a gala  
performance ends?

*Robert Hayden (1913-1980)*  
Collected Poems.

— Submitted by Mary Jo Johnston



# Comments from the director . . .

## Computers — wicked or wonderful?

**T**he dark side of the internet has been widely hyped in the media. Even I am amazed at some of the explicit sites that can be accessed for free on the net. Most reasonable people, including our legislators, want to protect our kids. As librarians we want to protect our children; we want to protect your constitutional right to access information; and we want to spend the tax dollars that you entrusted to us wisely. After much research, thought and discussion, our Library (like most public libraries in Illinois) decided against filters. Instead they opted for education, effective policies and efficient procedures. This has worked extremely well for our Library.

The fact that we offer unfiltered access to the Internet is something we do not widely advertise, but maybe we should. We've had unfiltered public Internet access for nearly 10 years, and each month we log over 3,000 sessions on our public computers. We've had very few infractions — you really should know that. Library users following the rules, bringing their books back on time, or using the computers for legitimate research, is not news. It's common place, but it is something you should know.

### Filters cost time, money

Over the last 12 years there have been numerous bills introduced on the state and federal level requiring libraries to install filters.

Each time a new bill is introduced we watch it carefully; and if it passes, we then follow the lawsuits, then the appeals, and then the appeals on the appeals. I can't even begin to fathom the amount of time and money that have been spent on the legal battles regarding filters.

While filters may be an excellent solution for your home computer, I have yet to see a filter that works well in a public library setting. I have talked to numerous librarians at libraries that do filter. All of them spent a considerable amount of money and continue



to spend time “tweaking” the filters. People find ways around the filters, or demand the staff turn them off because the filters often block legitimate research sites. Recently, Illinois HB 1727, an unfunded mandate requiring all public and school libraries to install filters on their public computers, was introduced.

Libraries and librarians who do not comply face fines of up to \$100 per day, and possibly imprisonment. It seems ridiculous that libraries and librarians are the ones to be penalized — not the creators of the sites, not the people actually accessing the sites.

If HB 1727 passes and becomes law, our Library's cost for providing free public computer access will more than quadruple.

If it passes, the liability and the additional expense will just be too high for some libraries; they will be forced to discontinue providing public internet access. Imagine no access to consumer information, online college classes, to the growing number of jobs advertised exclusively on the web.

Information is power; it can be life changing, even life saving. If HB1727 passes, that power will be diminished and for the neediest, it will be extinguished. That would truly be a crime.

*Cindy Fuerst, library director*

## NEW @ your library

Welcome to a new feature of BOOKMARKS noting some of the newest offerings at The Kankakee Public Library. Did you know that our library offers information in formats other than print? DVDs are becoming increasingly popular with our patrons. Here is a look at a couple of the recent DVDs that you may not find at the local video store. Check-out what KPL has to offer:

- **DVD 792.8092 BEE 2006 Been Rich All My Life.** Meet the Silver Belles, five tap dancers who performed in 1930's Harlem at the famed Apollo and Cotton Club, with legendary band leaders like Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington. They have rich stories to tell about the history they made during the Harlem Renaissance, illuminated by a treasure trove of archival film and photos.
- **DVD 976.3064 WHE When The Levees Broke.** One year after Hurricane Katrina decimated New Orleans, director Spike Lee presents a four-hour, four-part chronicle recounting, through words and images, one of our country's most profound natural disasters.



## **BOOKMARKS**

NEWSLETTER  
OF THE FRIENDS

### **FRIENDS OF THE KANKAKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

c/o Kankakee Public Library  
201 East Merchant Street  
Kankakee, IL 60901

Phone: 815 939-4564  
FAX 815/939-9057  
website:www.lions-online.org

THANK YOU  
KEY PRINTING  
111 East Court Street  
Kankakee, IL 60901  
815/ 933-1800

For printing this newsletter as a  
gift to Friends



# **Friends News and Events**

## **Annual Book Sale**

Get ready for this year's annual BIG book  
sale at the big summer event,  
The Strawberry Festival!

We will be looking for all of you to:

- ! Tell your Friends and friends
- ! Donate books
- ! Volunteer—it's more fun  
than work
- ! Buy books
- ! Enjoy the Festival's food and  
entertainment
- ! Go home happy and READ  
your summer away!



v u !

**Welcome  
New Member!**

◦ ! **Donna Worth**

**Our newest  
member brings  
our membership  
to 142!**

**Members, if  
you haven't done  
so, please  
renew NOW!**

Send your renewal envelopes to  
the library and keep with the  
movers and the shakers.

v u !