

# THOMPSON FREE LIBRARY

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2019



### *NO LIGHTHOUSES, NO LOBSTERS* by Tom Lyford

In September, TFL scored a literary daily double with not one, but two Maine mystery writers each introducing her latest thriller during the same program: Maureen Milliken's *Bad News Travels Fast* (the number 3 installment in her Bernie O'Dea series); and Sandra Neily's *Deadly Trespass: A Mystery in Maine*. It proved a unique evening as the authors, presenting in a tag-team format, exhibited so much in common, I couldn't help but see them as two happily passionate peas in the same pod.

Both hail from solid non-fiction backgrounds, Milliken having enjoyed a long career as a newspaper editor in three New England states and authoring *Get It Right: A Cranky Editor's Guide to Usage, Grammar, and Punctuation*; and Neily being the author of *Watching Out for Maine's Wildlife* as well as the author/editor of the blog, *Valuing the Nature of Maine*. But both admittedly begrudge having had to come around to the conclusion that "showing is better than telling"; i.e., "With fiction you can actually better demonstrate and more powerfully get across the truths you are passionately espousing." Both are ardent soldiers in the campaign to literarily redirect the Maine Tourism spotlight from the rocky Maine coastal shorelines onto "this equally deserving other Maine," the intriguing, wild settings of our beautiful northern and central woods ("No lighthouses, no lobsters"). And both were enthusiastic in sharing advice and answering questions about their craft. "Common advice is always, 'Write what you know,' whereas we advise 'No. Research! Go out and learn new stuff.'" Particularly engaging were their descriptions of the loneliness and isolation of the far inner sanctuaries of Maine's forest lands where cell phones don't work, and how that informed and directed their characters and plots.

Like Milliken, the protagonist of *Bad News* is the editor of a weekly newspaper based in the fictional Franklin County town of Redimere. When an Appalachian through-hiker becomes lost in the woods and is then found dead, it sets off a chain of events eventually including the disappearance of Redimere's police chief. This leaves editor Bernadette "Bernie" O'Dea to try to sort out what increasingly begins to develop into a murder investigation.

Neily's novel is an environmental murder mystery. Wolves have suddenly shown up in Maine's north woods and a tree-hugger is obviously responsible, but who? Land owners and others launch a secretive effort to eradicate the invasive population. Neily has had a lifelong passion for conservation and our native wildlife. "... a whitewater river outfitter, licensed Maine Guide, and co-founder of a coalition to protect the Penobscot River from a dam, I've been chased by moose, river otters, and mad mother partridges. And that's recent. My seriously unsupervised childhood exploring clam flats, deep forests, and secret streams grew into my mystery/thriller, *Deadly Trespass*."

### *CLIMATE CRISIS* by Kim Brawn

Robert Whittaker, from the Climate Education Project, gave a presentation at TFL in August to share essential information to help people understand global warming and climate change.

Greta Schroeder, TFL's director, was one of the attendees and said that Robert, a lawyer, spent much of the time laying out the details, making a clear case. He used charts to show how every year greenhouse gases increase at a much faster, more dramatic rate. He discussed all the dire impacts like flooding, arid deserts, humanitarian crises, and loss of wildlife.

Although Greta found the program "very informative and easy to digest," she said it was especially "hard to hear about how climate change—what humans are doing—is changing ecosystems and causing animal extinction."

For her, the most surprising fact was about food waste: it is one of the biggest contributors of greenhouse gas. Amazingly, if food waste were a country it would be the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases behind China and the U.S.

Everyone can make a difference. "People can buy local, compost, and put in solar panels," said Greta. But governments must take the lead in areas like transitioning to renewable energy and other large-scale missions. So it's essential to vote for projects that will reduce our carbon footprint and representatives who will take action against climate change.



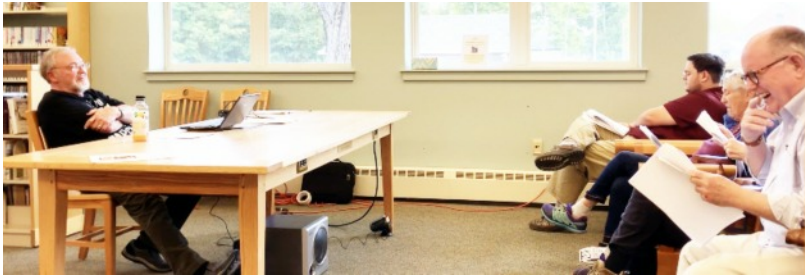
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#### *SETTING OFF LYRICAL FIREWORKS* by Kim Brawn

And now for something completely different. TFL's resident poet took my rather vague suggestion of doing something with lyrics and music clips for a 101 program and transformed it into a memorable, funny, moving, original presentation he offhanded called, "Lyrical Fireworks."



Tom got the party off to a raucous start with a hysterically bizarre version of the Beatles' classic "She Loves You" by Peter Sellers in his extremely weird Dr. Strangelove voice. Wow. Just wow. (Way to trigger those endorphins!)

In command of his sound system and selections via laptop, and with personal commentary that gave context and provided helpful segues, Tom chose songs that made us laugh uproariously, giggle, shake our heads, and even tear up. He combined the relatable with the comically absurd.

The music—especially the lyrics—engaged the audience as he took us back and forth across the spectrum of emotions. Thanks to his handout, we followed along with the lyrics to the dozen plus tunes he played. A playlist that included odd gems like Johnny Cash's "Flushed from the Bathroom of your Heart" as well as the stirring ballad "Christmas in the Trenches" by John McCutcheon and my personal favorite, the incredibly funny "Cows with Guns" by Dana Lyons.

He also included singer-songwriter and local resident David Mallett's "Comin' Apart at the Seams (a.k.a. Hometown Heroes)"—a poignant tribute to Mallett's rebellious and troubled high school friend who died tragically, with little notice, in 1969:

*Ah Henry, you sure bought that  
Whole 'James Dean thing'  
Right down to the end,  
Drinkin' beers and bangin' gears,  
On the outside lookin' in*

*Such a desperate time on the small town stage  
With no prize comin' for the comin' of age  
So you burned with a passion and  
You burned with a rage  
Till the fire done pulled you in*

For just over an hour on that second Thursday in September, Tom was our guide—our cerebral DJ—taking us on lyrical mystery tour. What a ride. Fireworks, indeed.

#### *SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS* by Kim Brawn

In July, TFL's Michelle Fagan shared her passion and knowledge of essential oils with a packed house. She gave us an invaluable primer on the topic as well as actual recipes to create our own fragrances. We learned about top, middle, and base notes and carrier oils. She even recommended which brands to buy.

The best part? We each got to make our own roller fragrance. She prepared and supplied us with all the essential oils needed to make

any of the recipes on her informative handout. I chose to make Juicy Fruit (Michelle told us that citrus "is very uplifting.") The recipe calls for: 4 drops of grapefruit, 4 bergamot, & 4 orange. I love the way it smells—so fresh and zesty—the perfect little pick me up.



During the fragrance-making part, Michelle stopped at each table, guiding us through the process and giving tips from years of making her own signature fragrance and working with essential oils. A lively and energetic vibe filled the air—along with all the scents. Everyone was involved and focused, while chatting and laughing. A very uplifting afternoon.



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#### *UNDERSTANDING THE TODDLAH* by Kim Brawn

Children's author and illustrator Kevin Hawkes, a Maine resident who has created over 50 acclaimed picture and chapter books, visited TFL in July making quite an impression, as the little ones watched his drawings come to vibrant life.

Ms. Michelle was also impressed by "how patient and understanding he was with young children in the audience—telling the parents that he knows they can't sit still the whole time" since he has kids of his own.

Meanwhile, Kevin, known for "The Wicked Big Toddlah," talked and drew the whole time and he graciously gifted two drawings to the library. "He talked about where he gets his ideas and a little bit of the process—he's really down to earth," said Michelle.



#### *IMAGINING GROWING UP TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE* by Tom Lyford

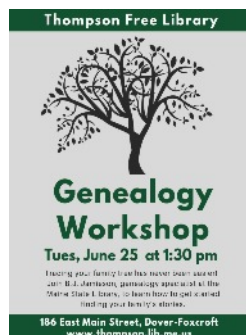
I fantasized being a police officer when I played Cops & Robbers at age seven, but my real desire was to grow up to be a cowboy just like my hero, Roy Rogers. I really didn't have a lot to go on though, other than *Dick Tracy* in the comic strips and a few singing cowboy movies at Center Theatre. However the crowd of boys and girls, our future men and women, who visited the library on August 23<sup>rd</sup> got to enjoy a great opportunity to meet, greet, and ask questions of some of Piscataquis County's real life heroes, and experience a little hands-on-the-hardware to boot.

It was a fun as well as educational afternoon, thanks to the good weather but especially the first responders and other volunteers who gave of their time and effort to wow our kids with the uniforms and other career trappings that define them to impressionable children. We at TFL extend a hearty Thank You to the Piscataquis Emergency Management Agency, The Piscataquis Sheriff's Office, Mayo Regional Hospital, The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Maine Forest Service, and the U. S. National Weather Service of Caribou, Maine, all of whom made this day a smashing success.



#### *FAMILY DETECTIVE* by Kim Brawn

Start your genealogical dig at the library with two incredible online resources: use Ancestry Library Edition while you're on the Thompson Free Library computer network and browse My Heritage at home on your laptop. Both can be accessed through the Digital Maine Library (there is a link on our website, [thompsonfreelibrary.lib.me.us](http://thompsonfreelibrary.lib.me.us)).



These two powerful search tools were the focus of Maine State Library Specialist B.J. Jamieson's Genealogy Workshop early this summer. Among those at this well-attended event were library director Greta Schroeder and children's librarian Michelle Fagan.

When it comes to learning your family's stories you really do have to play detective. "It can be like solving a mystery, following clues—finding bits and pieces, like a puzzle," explained Greta.

One takeaway from the workshop: if you reach a dead end, try a different spelling or variation of a name. There can be spelling mistakes or errors from the scanning process and our ancestors may have changed their names. "Be creative in your search," said Greta.

"And write down the original source," Michelle added, since online sites can shut down and content is always changing. B.J. also pointed out that despite the amount of information available online, hardcopy materials are still an important resource. For example, you might find written records at your local church that help keep your search moving forward. And don't forget: TFL has a genealogy collection featuring information on local families, as well as vital records, and histories of Maine towns and cities.

In related news: Greta is excited to announce that TFL will be digitizing all the Piscataquis Observers from 1838-1975. You can already find 1976-2009 available online via the TFL website.

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#### *THE ARTISTS' WAY* by Kim Brawn

August artist Edward Muennich's stunning photography showcased the beauty of the Maine landscape as well as his considerable skills and creativity. His primary focus was Acadia National Park (he lives on MDI, where he works mostly as a carpenter) and the Borestone area (he and his partner Kerri have a camp on Lake Onawa). In some photos, he plays with long exposure, in others he captures interesting natural events—all images are a result of “exploring places he loves, looking in depth for compositions that excite him.” And his striking displays definitely created an air of excitement for patrons and visitors alike.



In September, Dover-Foxcroft art educators Jane Blay and Martha Ladd's “10x10” exhibit stole the show. They each created ten pieces of art within a 10 by 10-inch canvas. As Jane explained, “Any medium could be used to fill the dimensions. Any style could be incorporated from realism to abstract, and any area could be investigated such as landscape, photography or even mixed media—the only restriction was the size.”



In this exhibit, said Martha, “I wanted to focus on feelings and experiences . . . I wanted to explore the restriction with color and light. This forced me to experiment and really feel the colors and shapes.” Martha, who is an elementary visual arts teacher at SeDoMoCha, paints with watercolor, oil, and acrylics and is passionate about photography.

Jane, an art teacher at Foxcroft Academy, has exhibited her artwork at galleries in Belfast and Portland and participated in art shows in Bangor and Waterville. She has won several awards for mixed media and pastel. She likes to “focus on beautiful landscapes and shorelines and is now getting into abstract art and photography.”

#### *FULL CIRCLE* by Kim Brawn

The sunflowers that Ms. Michelle and her young friends planted during her TFL program at the end of May were donated to the Piscataquis County Soil & Water Conservation District's Law Farm to be planted in the children's garden.



In August, Michelle participated in a PCSWCD program at the farm; she and the children got to see how the sunflowers are growing and listen to Jennifer Lund, known as Maine's Bee Whisperer (a.k.a. Maine state apiarist) talk about bees and what they do for Maine. Michelle said that “it rained a lot until we went to the garden where the kids had fun exploring—looking at caterpillars, bugs, and crickets with magnifying glasses.”

There, they sat on a tarp and listened to Ms. Michelle read *Gotta Go! Gotta Go!*—it's (appropriately enough) about a caterpillar turning into a monarch butterfly.

“It was a good community effort,” Michelle said of the event.

Photo courtesy of PCSWCD



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#### *ANIMAL ATTRACTION* by Kim Brawn



On July 3rd, a presentation by New Gloucester-based humane animal removal and rehab service Sparks' Ark (part of our kids' summer program series) broke TFL's all-time attendance record with 185 kids and adults showing up outside the library to see the wild animals!

"I would totally have them come back again," raved TFL children's librarian Michelle Fagan. "Josh (Sparks) is great at what he does—he really knows animals." It was a fun show-and-tell, with him sharing his experiences, telling stories, and educating everyone about the animals he brought including a fennec fox, an owl, a hedgehog, and a boa constrictor (that he let the kids touch).

Michelle told me that the fox has become Josh's family pet after being giving up by another family who couldn't take care of her. Josh explained that the little fox is so nervous while riding in cars that she has to sit in the front passenger seat in her kennel, reaching her paw out now and then to touch Josh for comfort. ☺



#### *TFL IS GOING TO THE DOG!* by Tom Lyford

"Space treats" and other snacks? Free books from Ms. Michelle's reading closet? A scavenger hunt around the library? And... a dog named Erma? No, this is definitely *not* your grandparents' TFL. An end-of-summer reading party in mid-August celebrated the last day of the second season of April Taylor's *Reading with Erma*, a program (one of TFL's most popular and successful) designed to improve the reading skills of students.

Every Wednesday afternoon all summer long, a little line of anxious kiddos would sign up for their own one-on-one "appointments" to lie with therapy and reading education assistance dog, Erma, on the little mattress, to relax, to snuggle up, and to read aloud a book of their choosing to one of the most non-judgmental listeners on the planet. April, who accompanies her cute clients on the doggy bed to offer patient and kind assistance, has reported marked improvements in both the levels and confidence of her readers at summer's end.

But then, of course, after the party (alas), it was time to start gearing up for (you guessed it) Back to School Time in September. However this year another handful of students, thanks to our visiting angels April and Erma, will hopefully be heading back to the classrooms with a more positive attitude toward reading. And you can just bet our cute little card-carrying patrons will be anxiously awaiting *next* summer, and the return of season three.



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#### *TEEN TIME by Kim Brawn*

How to get teens to come to the library? Have them involved with planning library programs and events, especially aimed at their age group. It's been a busy summer for TFL's Teen Advisory Board (TAB).



Greta describes TAB meetings as an “opportunity to share thoughts and suggestions for programs.” Greta says those in the group have been “forthcoming with ideas and like being involved.” Their brainstorming paid off, turning concepts into reality, with this summer’s high school book club and afterhours teen game nights.

Michelle sat in on the book club and was struck by “how open and willing they were to have conversations on hard and mature topics. They were honest and open and felt comfortable talking about those subjects even with an adult present.”

TAB held two game nights. The second one in August proved a big success. “We had 17,” said Greta. “They ate pizza, laughed, and played games. We even had to order a second round of pizza because there were so many people.”

Michelle described it as “a relaxed atmosphere with both guys and girls—a good, even mix.” And a good way to reach out to teens. Part of the draw, Greta pointed out, is that “it was after hours, so they had the library to themselves for the evening.”

(Reminder: TAB meetings count towards FA’s community service requirement and the book group towards FA’s reading requirements. TAB is open to students in grades 6-12.)

#### *NATURE’S PHARMACY by Kim Brawn*

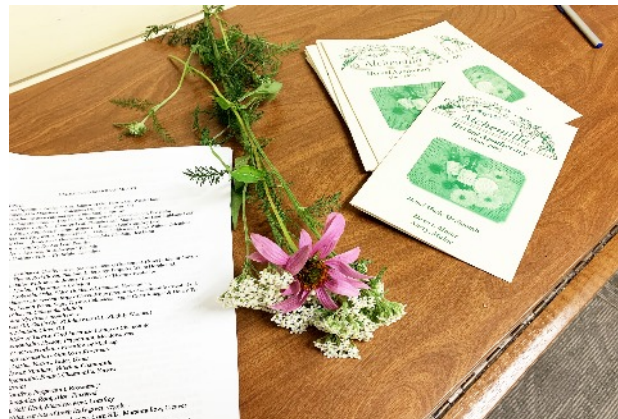
The third time is still a charm for herbalist Linda Tisdale as she returned in August to give her third interactive talk in three years. She was met by a welcoming and curious bunch who eagerly absorbed her vast knowledge and experience. Her goal was to help us create our own herbal and homeopathic medicine chest—or at least get started on it.

In her trademark calming, compassionate style, Linda gave lots of useful information and another round of show and tell, as she passed around various plants to teach us how to identify them and learn what parts are used for tinctures, etc.

It was an interactive hour—an ongoing q&a session in between Linda’s interesting lessons. Many asked questions about how to treat various health issues—which herbs would help which conditions. Her comprehensive handout features herbs and homeopathic remedies for common ailments, and herbs that are generally considered safe.

Linda discussed tinctures and told us that plantain (the widespread, hardy weed, not the type of banana served with my sizzling shrimp fajitas!) has drawing properties and its leaves are medicinal, they can be used to create a salve that fights infections and heals insect bites.

Linda urged us to “pay attention to what grows in your backyard, notice the plants around you.” After all, nature almost always has what we need to heal ourselves.





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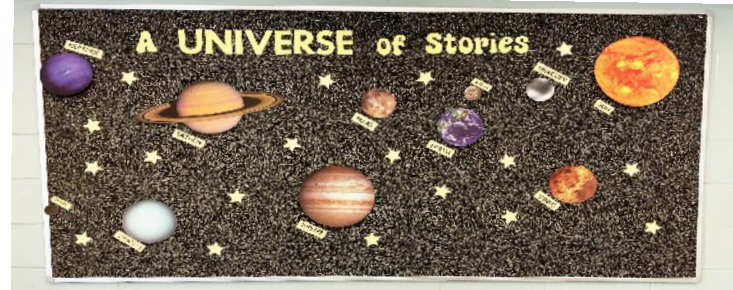
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When it comes to library volunteers, we lucked out this summer. Alex Shaffer, a history student at USM, has library blood flowing in his veins. He practically grew up at TFL, helped with our switch to Balsam during his high school years, and has worked with the DF Historical Society, Foxcroft Academy Library, USM Gorham Library, and the Osher Map Library. During his internship this summer, Alex helped us in many ways, including organizing and updating barcodes on our local history materials, getting our community resources up-to-date, performing book repairs, and taking photos of our special summer events. It is with a great sense of gratitude that we wish Alex Godspeed as he continues his journey on to his chosen field. Thank you so much, Alex, for all your help, hard work, and great photos (many of which are in this newsletter)!



Ms. Michelle called it a teddy bear sleepover, more like a takeover! What fun and mischief these cute bears got into!



To boldly go...where no reader has gone before. Another universally inspiring bulletin board by Barbara Lockwood.



Author Aislinn Sarnacki from the Bangor Daily News talked about her new book, *Dog Friendly Hikes in Maine* and signed copies, much to the delight of her many local fans.



Phyllis Lyford, décor diva, decks us out in spooky, autumn style!

The sounds of summer...



And the band played on...Dexter's HJ Crosby Band makes their own kind of music.



The soothing, melodious music from a terrifically talented trio: Susan Ramsey, violin; Ruth Fogg, cello; and Isleen Halvorsen, harp encompassed the three C's (Celtic, Contemporary, & Classical) while captivating the rapt crowd.



Martin Swinger played it humorous and whimsical, with mostly silly sing-alongs for the kids.