

# THOMPSON FREE LIBRARY

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2024

### Eclipsing All Expectations

The last total solar eclipse in this area was over 60 years ago, and the next one is in 2079, so we wanted to make sure we helped our patrons get the most out of this one! In working with the state library, the tourism association, county EMA, the town, Center Theatre, and others, we helped with a lot of the logistics that went into this once in a lifetime event. Another key piece of this was handing out eclipse glasses! What started out as around 100 glasses from the state library ended with us being the distribution hub for over 1,000 pairs of eclipse glasses. The eclipse was nearly-perfect. The weather was gorgeous! Although there was a lot of traffic beforehand, there were no major accidents and the roads (here at least) cleared before we reached the totality, so no one was stranded. It was a wonderful, peaceful event that everyone seemed to enjoy. Now, we are working to collect new or used eclipse glasses that we can send to South America, so schoolchildren there can use them during the next eclipse. If you have any, please bring them to the library. —Jon Knepp



### Highlighting Our Literary And Natural Resources

by Jon Knepp



At TFL, we love to highlight the area's authors and artisans, and we got the chance to do both on March 5th when we hosted an author's panel in conjunction with the Maine Highlands Arts Council at the Central Hall Commons. Featured authors were Chris Packard, author, teacher, and assistant director at the International Cryptozoology Museum, Rollin Thurlow of Northwoods Canoe, Jerry Stelmok of Island Falls Canoe, and Garrett Conover of North Woods Ways, though trying to sum up any of their endeavors in a few words is impossible. They all have accomplished so much!

What came to me during the program was how all of the authors exemplify the Maine highlands. All of their work, written or otherwise, shows a deep reverence for the natural resources of our area. They also have a great love for storytelling, another tradition that runs deep here. Allison Smith, who helped co-host the program, added "the

four authors each brought their own unique perspectives to the art of writing, and while they came from very different disciplines, they shared fascinating insights into the writing and publishing process, as well as their love of Maine and experiences in the natural world in our beautiful state." It was wonderful to host this event and highlight four of our region's luminaries. Chris can be found at [www.christopherpackard.com](http://www.christopherpackard.com), Rollin: [www.wooden-canoes.com](http://www.wooden-canoes.com), Jerry: [www.islandfallscanoe.com](http://www.islandfallscanoe.com), Garrett can be found on Facebook.

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## A Creek Runs Through It

by Kim Brawn



Bangor-born author Dee Dauphinee shared his insider account of one of Maine's most-followed mysteries when he stopped by TFL on Thursday, January 4. Dee has written novels, biographies, and essays and lived in Europe and South America. He has also been a farmer, a photographer, and a fishing and mountaineering guide and been involved in several state and international search and rescue teams.

He wrote the best-seller *When You Find My Body* which tells the story of Geraldine Largay who vanished in July 2013 while hiking the Appalachian Trail in Maine. He describes what caused her to go astray and the massive search and rescue operation that followed and how and where they finally found her remains.

His latest work, *The Sage of Dibbin Creek*, is an engrossing account of a fatherless twelve-year-old boy with learning challenges who finds solace in nature and meets a wise and kind man who changes the course of his life.

It was neat to hear how Dee got the idea for the book. The inspiration hit him 40 years ago in Wilson, Wyoming in the foothills of the Grand Tetons by Fish Creek where he was meeting a friend to go fly fishing. As he waited for his friend, Dee noticed a farm stand and farm nearby. He watched as a young boy about nine years old worked really hard, helping his mother put up fence posts.

The two would take breaks and talk and laugh together. He didn't see a father figure with them at the time.

Witnessing that scene and those exchanges, Dee fleshed out the story of a boy who grows up on a farm without a father. He has learning disabilities and meets a retired educator by the creek; the man teaches him to fly fish, about conservation and wildlife biology—and ultimately teaches him to read at 13 years old. The book, says Dee, is a testament to the value of mentorship and the healing powers of flyfishing—nature, really—and human connection.

Dee spoke about his lifelong struggle with dyslexia and how a young teacher in Bangor stayed with him after school to help him learn to read better and improve his comprehension skills and confidence. "That mentorship changed everything," he said.

Most of his talk was about *When You Find My Body*. He said that he's received thousands of emails from readers saying that the book helped them change the way they hike, even changed their life. Geraldine was an inexperienced hiker and camper who grew up in Tampa and lived in Nashville. Dee drove home this point: don't rely only on technology when hiking. Woodcraft, preparedness, maps & compasses (and the skills to use them) are essential.

"I really liked how Dee shared a lot of his knowledge and personal experience in search and rescue operations. It really highlighted the need to know some basic survival skills before heading out into the woods, much less try to hike the entire Appalachian trail. There were dozens of very small steps that, had Inchworm (Gerry's trail name) taken even one, she probably would have been rescued without incident. It's a really powerful story and people responded to it," said TFL director Jon Knepp.

(Learn more about Dee at [ddauphinee.com](http://ddauphinee.com) and watch his talk on our YouTube channel.)



**Watch this on Youtube**

## Outward Bound



Alexandra Bennett is a Maine guide, former co-manager at Borestone Mountain Audubon Sanctuary, and current co-owner of North Woods Ways in Willimantic. On February 21, Alexandra came by to share her tips on hiking and outdoor survival preparedness with some kids who love the outdoors. Youth services librarian Michelle Fagan said that she wished more kids had been able to participate and take advantage of Alexandra's vast knowledge and experience. "The small group who attended really enjoyed it. The kids learned to always carry a candy bar like Snickers in your hiking pack because it is good fuel and calories to help create body heat. They liked getting compasses and learning how to use them," said Michelle (Find Alexandra Conover Bennett on Facebook.) —Kim Brawn

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## Wishin' & Hopin' & Plantin' & Growin'

by Kim Brawn

When the seed library appears, excitement fills the air as people open and close drawers, browsing for the perfect find. Even if the weather doesn't reflect spring, the seed library is a welcome reminder that "It's ALMOST here!" People may be searching for something specific, or a random packet will jump out at them, and they decide to give it a try. "Kids especially really seem to like taking home a very obscure seed packet and seeing what happens!" says library director Jon Knepp.

All of the seeds were donated by patrons or businesses. Special thanks to University of

Maine Cooperative Extension Piscataquis County, Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District, Ripley Farm, Burpee Seeds, Fedco Seeds and the other individuals who helped make it happen throughout the years.

Besides free seeds, fifteen bags of potting soil (donated by Cooperative Extension) were scooped up in just a few hours. Have extra seeds lying around? We need flowers, beets, herbs, tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, peppers, and pumpkin seeds the most, though we will take almost anything!



## Not Your Grandparents' 4H

Many community groups use the library for various activities. It was great to get this update on one of them from Trisha Smith, UMaine Cooperative Extension: "The Macaws 4-H Public Speaking Club started meeting at Thompson Free Library on February 27. Every week they learned a little more and practiced for the Piscataquis County 4-H Public



Speaking Tournament. There were three Cloverbuds (age 5-8) and three Juniors (age 9-13) presenting. Everyone's hard work was evident, and the audience was engaged and entertained. The judges were blown away and excited for the future of 4-H Public Speaking in Piscataquis County!" —Kim Brawn



### Starting Spring Early

In the deepest, snowiest part of winter, people love to dream of spring. This is why the gardening classes from the UMaine Cooperative Extension Office have been so popular! This year, Kate Garland took over for Laurie and Donna for "Starting Seeds Indoors" on February 15th. We had about 20 attendees to the interactive workshop, where patrons learned best practices, got to start some seeds, and took home seed starting mix. We love working with the extension office and look forward to continuing this partnership next year! —Jon Knepp

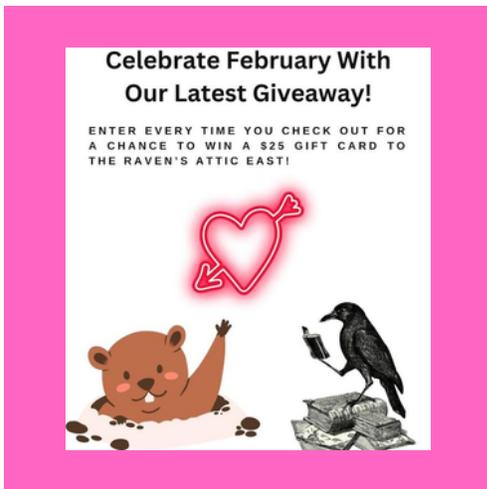
## Locally Sourced

Movies, antiques, and maple syrup made winter a little more palatable as we rolled out the second year of our Winter Giveaways. Patrons enter to win when they check out an item at the library. Special thanks to Center Theatre, Raven’s Attic East, and Bob’s Sugarhouse for their awesome gift cards! But wait, there’s more—in April we will be raffling off two copies of Paul Doiron’s most recent book, *Dead Man’s Wake*, to celebrate his April 30th (6 p.m.) visit to TFL. “People really like the winter giveaways! I plan to do them again next year,” says director Jon Knepp. —Kim Brawn



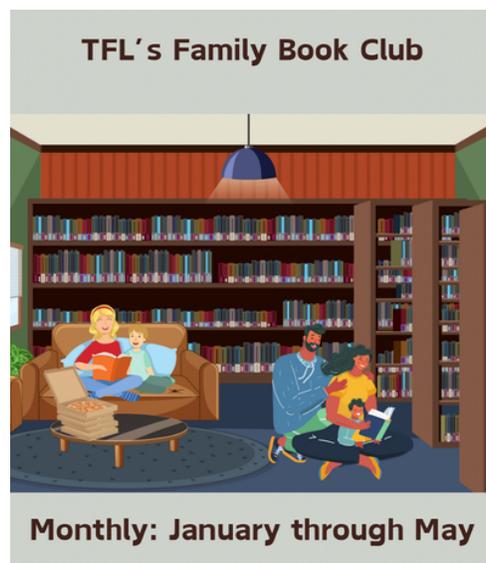
### Opening Up About Primaries

Carole Boothroyd of the non-partisan Highlands Regional chapter of the League of Women Voters explained Maine’s new semi-open primaries at a program on January 30th. The state changed its primary laws to allow voters unenrolled in political parties to vote in primary elections, but the sudden change led to a lot of confusion. Carole explained who can vote when and for candidates in what party. It was very helpful and those in attendance appreciated the explanations. For those who missed the presentation, you can watch it on our YouTube channel or learn more at [lwvme.org/semiopen](http://lwvme.org/semiopen). —Jon Knepp



## Raising Readers

Thinking of ways to brighten the dark winter months, much less ways to engage kids and adults, is a difficult stretch. Well, TFL’s Michelle Fagan (a.k.a. Ms. Michelle) has managed to do both with her Family Book Club that debuted in January. “I think the families are enjoying it. We don’t have many families but the ones we do have are fun to share and be with. Our last session will be in May, and we will probably pick back up at the start of winter. I started the club because winter is long, and a club is another thing for families to do, but also reading as a family is good for conversations, reading improvement and comprehension for kids and sometimes even adults,” Michelle said. —Kim Brawn



## Work in Progress

The Remote Workers Grant, which we received last year in order to improve spaces at the library for remote workers, is progressing slowly but surely! Since installing the ROOM privacy booths last year, they have been in almost constant use! I have been amazed at the number of people using them. We have also installed two new heat pumps and an air exchange unit downstairs to improve the air quality. The second, smaller room in the basement for patron use is almost ready as well. Hopefully in the spring, we’ll be able to reintroduce you to a new and improved downstairs space at the library. Stay tuned for more updates! —Jon Knepp



TFL's displayer-in-chief Shannen Rhoda celebrated literary award-winners,



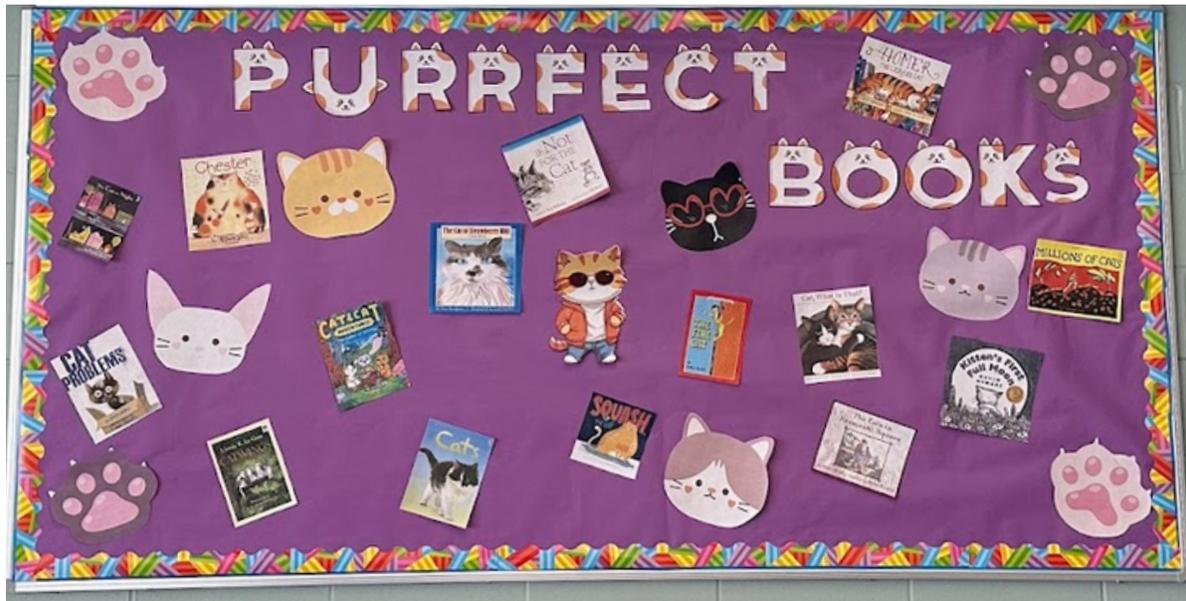
the luck (and talent) of the Irish,



and put her own spin on the Parks & Recreation Galentine's Day theme!



# Screen Shots



Ms. Michelle brings together books and kitties—the purrfect combination!

**Thanks to Kazia Knepp for her help with layout!**



March's Family Fun Night featured a create-your-own scavenger hunt! May 14 will be the last time for this games-snack-& more program until next winter.

One of our patrons, Jennifer Sylvain, shared a picture of delicious-looking sticky buns she baked thanks to one of our cookbooks!



We always have a puzzle going, this one proved trickier than expected. Some stand and put in a piece of two, others sit for a while and make progress—a few stay for hours and finish it!