



Friends
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Friends of the
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macomblibraryfriends.org

Winter 2024

The joy of book clubs



Pictured above, attendees to the “All Book Clubs in McDonough County” get-together.

Connie LaRue

Book clubs come about in many ways. In my case, for years I didn't want to join a book club. When I was retired and ready, I created my own book club. I invited people I didn't know or didn't know well. Now eight of us have been participants of “The No Stress Book Club” for over seven years. And, I also participate in a few other book clubs.

As a retired English teacher, I wanted to create more opportunities for reading, conversation and communication. Yes, it's about book clubs! Three years ago, I decided I wanted to create a gathering of book clubs just to celebrate the joy of reading and sharing. I made several plans and I also contacted the libraries in McDonough County. Readers were asked if they were in a book club or knew anyone who was in a book club. I sent out information and flyers. To prepare for the event and encourage participation, in mid-September I participated in a TSPR commentary titled The Joy of Book Clubs. Sixteen book clubs in McDonough signed up and I know there are more.

The “Gathering of All the Book Clubs in McDonough County” took place on September 28. We met at Macomb Arts Center to enjoy the evening. Food, flowers, drinks, bookmarks and book club booklets were on the table as folks arrived. Booklets noted the names of book club members and some of the titles of their books. Sixteen speakers took turns describing details of their book club. We encouraged participants to get up and move to different tables

in order to meet and enjoy getting to know others. A list of book club questions was available, but almost everyone was actively participating.

Over 80 people attended and were talking about book clubs! I was thrilled. It's my passion to connect people by reading. I'm encouraged by the many members who are readers.

It was a great evening. I am so appreciative of the dedication and enthusiasm of The No Stress Book Club! Thank you.

Several folks have asked and suggested an annual event. I'm thinking about that.

Some have asked questions about joining a book club. I am happy to speak to anyone who would like to explore book clubs. Right now, by a suggestion, I'm in the process of creating a non-fiction book club. Send a message if you are interested in anything about book clubs. connieklarue@gmail.com or 309-255-5055.

BOOK SALE COMING UP . . .



from the President

Paula Wise

Happy 2024. I hope it is a healthy and happy year for all of us and that we all have time for plenty of reading!

Speaking of reading, I just finished reading Barbra Streisand's 1000 page autobiography, *My Name is Barbara*. I hear that the audio version takes 48 hours of listening. Barbra Streisand has led an extraordinary life. Not only is she an amazing entertainer, but she is a caring and concerned citizen. She has donated much of her money and talent to her passions of fighting heart disease and other health issues, climate change related concerns, and political campaigns. Reading this lengthy book got me to thinking about how long my autobiography would be – certainly nowhere near 1000 pages. I feel as though I would be lucky to fill 300 pages and even my family and friends would likely rate it DNF (did not finish)! Not sure if this makes me seem boring or just extremely stable! How long would your autobiography be?

Unlike many Macomb friends, I am happy to spend most of the winter at home although we do have a week in Florida planned for later this season. This Midwesterner has always enjoyed the change of seasons. In warmer weather I like to read outside on our deck, but in the winter, sitting inside and glancing out the windows suits me just fine!



All you wanted to know: “What Are You Reading?”

Kate Joswick

Years ago when I joined the Friends of the Library Board, I mentioned at my first meeting that one of my favorite activities that the Friends sponsored was the book review column, written by area people, that was published occasionally in the local newspaper. You know how it goes. I was immediately asked to take over the management of the project. Since that fateful meeting, I have been submitting book reviews written by area residents to a succession of Macomb newspapers. The newspapers came and went but the review column lived on. Currently, the column appears in the Tuesday edition of *Community News Brief*.

The first reader's review that I submitted ran in November, 2007. Since that time almost 1,000 reviews have been published under the banner “What Are You Reading.” Some reviewers are regulars, some are one-timers. Over all, about 175 people have cared enough to promote reading in our area by sharing their opinions of a book they have read. What has kept me at this job every week for over sixteen years is my fascination with the variety of works that people write about. There have been occasional duplicate reviews but, for the most part, people love (or hate) very different works. What a wonderful statement this makes about the diversity of readers and reading in our community. I personally, and others as well, have added many of the reviewed books to their own *must read* list.

Although most of the reviewers are adults, sometimes children write reviews of books. I love to receive these and when they appear in the newspaper, I imagine the children enjoy seeing their work in print too. A few years ago, a home-schooled girl was a regular contributor. When she applied to colleges, she had a portfolio of published reviews to enhance her application. Once, an east-coast author of a book contacted me to say how delighted he was to have come across an insightful and well-written review of his recently published book in our newspaper. How did he find the Friends column in our small-town publication?

Most of the reviews are five or six sentences long, but occasionally people do make longer submissions. The basic formula includes a few sentence summary of the work and a few sentences about why the reviewer liked it or did not like it. I always enjoy it when a negative viewpoint is expressed. Maybe it stimulates even more discussion around the dinner table or water cooler than a positive review.

Please consider keeping this newspaper feature alive by submitting a review of your own. There are never too many re-

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Local Author Roundup

Jim Courter

Rhymes With Fool Peasantry Press 2018 - a mystery featuring first-person narrator Barry Pool, a Milwaukee private eye and former investigative journalist who takes the job of finding the missing son of a U.S. Senate candidate, only to find himself in the middle of a murderous neo-Nazi conspiracy.

First Things First: Ephemera and Offscourings of a Distracted Writer, self-published, 2019, a collection of essays, humor, and short stories, most of which I have published over the years in magazines and newspapers.

I grew up in east central Illinois near the Indiana border, but I've lived in Macomb long enough—almost fifty years—that if someone asked me where I was from I'd have to say Macomb.

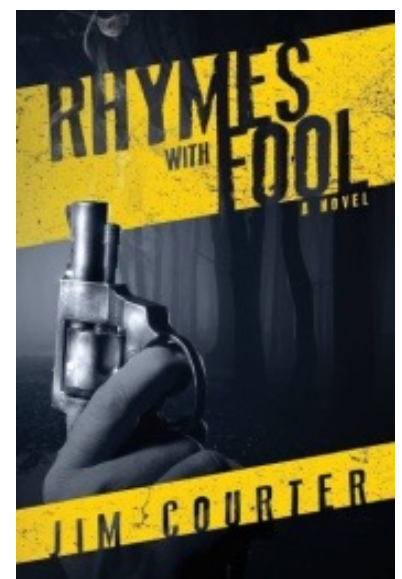
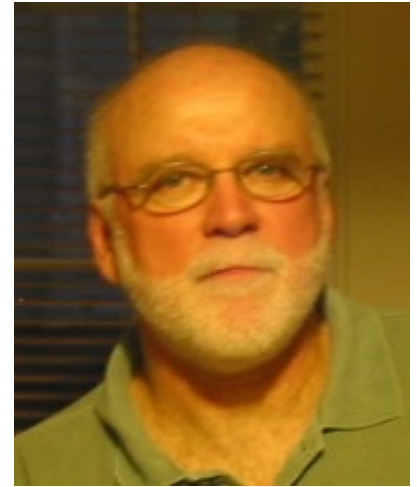
My inspiration to write came from my being a reader, not from anyone who encouraged me to do so. I started writing in my twenties when I was reading stories and novels and felt like I could turn something out that was as good as what I was reading.

Rhymes With Fool grew out of actual events and time I've spent in Wisconsin—the Milwaukee area and the north woods.

Other than my two published books, I've written five other short novels, two of which are scheduled for publication next year. One is a sequel to *Rhymes With Fool*. The other, also a mystery, is set in Champaign-Urbana and features as the first-person narrator an underemployed shopping mall security guard. I'm looking for a publisher for the three others, a mix of mystery and satire that constitute a trilogy called *Irony Towers*.

On some days I agree with William Zinsser, who said he didn't enjoy writing, he enjoyed having written. I do like taking a nebulous idea and shaping it, in draft after draft, until I'm satisfied that I've said what I wanted to. The main challenge for me is to be disciplined. Writing is hard work, taxing on the mind and even the body, what with long periods of sitting, that and facing the blank page and realizing how much work lies ahead before a project is finished, especially if it's a novel.

I don't have much occasion to give advice to other writers, but if I did I'd be disinclined to do so, in part because I've always felt that giving advice is presumptuous, but also because the approach to writing is intensely personal. I've read plenty of advice to writers, and it often strikes me that the one giving advice is in effect saying, "This is what works for me, so you should do it, too." That doesn't make sense to me. It doesn't take into account differences in life circumstances, temperament, and sensibility, among other things. That said, I have two recommendations—not advice. Read. Read widely, and read without prejudice. To be a reader is a writer's first obligation. The second is to always be prepared when inspiration comes. Carry something to write with and to write on, or a pocket-size recording device of some kind, or email or text it to yourself using a smart phone if you have one. (I don't.)



Friends of the Macomb Public Library

c/o Macomb Public Library

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Macomb, IL 61455

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Adult Reading Program

Sharon Sample, Adult Services

We still have our Dementia, Mental Health Awareness & Suicide Prevention, and Community Engagement exhibits displaying. Please feel free to check these materials out.

Our annual winter reading program kicked off at 9 am Monday, January 8, 2024 and will end at 5 pm February 29, 2024. The theme this year is Slide into a Good Book, featuring penguins. Participating adults will need to read or listen to any 3 books, including children's books. Ebooks, eAudiobooks, books on CD, and print are all fair game!

Happy reading in a warm, safe place!!

what are you reading?

from page 2

views; I am always seeking submissions. The book does not have to be current or held by the library. Send your review for the "What Are You Reading" column to me, Kate Joswick, at joswickkate@gmail.com. It usually takes 4-6 weeks before it appears in *Community News Brief*.

Upcoming Events

Page Turners Book Club Social @ Wine Sellers

4:30PM January 17

Enjoy beverages and help decide this year's title lineup!

Book Sale

11-2 Saturday, February 3
Library Annex

Congratulations!

To our board Treasurer Desiree and husband Levi on the birth of their daughter, Stevi.

Desiree and Stevi attended the January board meeting. The board was so caught up in looking at the sleeping baby, we totally forgot to take pictures!

Hopefully, we can feature a picture in our next issue.