



News From the Library

Spring has sprung inside and out at Duncan Library. Our beautiful daffodils and hyacinths, donated by the Duncan Friends, are in full bloom just outside our windows. The wonderful scent of the hyacinths carries all the way to our doors!

Inside, we're celebrating spring and new beginnings with our Early Literacy Activity Center. This new center, located in our children's area, offers educational and manipulative items for parents and caregivers to use with preschoolers during their visits to Duncan Library. Blocks, letters, toys and alphabet bags can be used to teach early reading skills through play and exploration. The Library of Virginia is using grant funds from LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) to place these literacy centers in public libraries across the state.

Stop by Duncan Library soon to enjoy our flowers and be sure to peek into our children's area to see kids busy with literacy activities! You'll also want to visit Duncan Library this spring for these upcoming programs and exhibits:

- In addition to our regular story times in English, Spanish and German for preschoolers, we are now offering a **Paws to Read** program twice a month for older children. This program, offered in partnership with PAL (People Animals Love) offers reading sessions on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays each month from 5:30-6:30 pm. Children in grades 1 through 6 can sign up for a 15 minute slot to read to one of the trained therapy dogs. It's great reading practice and fun, too! Call Kyle Maier at the library for details.

- April's selection for the Duncan Book Discussion Group is the All Alexandria Reads selection, **The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind**. In May the group will be discussing Albert Camus's **The Plague**. Newcomers are always welcome to the group which meets the third Wednesday of each month at 7pm. Call Ruth Hailu at the library for details.

- April is National Poetry Month and our exhibit area will feature poetry from our collection for adults and kids. In May we'll be exhibiting both artwork and books in recognition of Mental Health Month.

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PLUS, Author Talk Write-ups	pgs. 6, 7, 9 and 11.

Duncan Library Spring Book Sale!

Wednesday May 2:	7 pm-8:30 pm (<i>Friends Preview Night</i>)
Thursday, May 3	10:30 am-7 pm
Friday May 4:	10:30 am-6 pm
Saturday May 5:	10:30 am-5 pm

President's Letter

This issue marks my first as president of the Board of the Friends of Duncan Library. My predecessor, Tony Springer, bowing out after six years of accomplishments and able leadership, provided me with the honor and opportunity of taking the helm. I am looking forward to my new role with great anticipation. Our mission stays the same: raising funds and public awareness in the community to support the services and programs of the Duncan Library. Along with me, your leadership team is:

vice president, Martha-Helene Stapleton; treasurer, Carolyn Harris; secretary, Linda Morefield; and membership chair, Gay Hurst. We are fully committed to ensure the same high quality services and programs that you have come to appreciate. Furthermore we have a number of new initiatives under consideration, which will enhance your membership and involvement in our wonderful neighborhood library. Lest I forget, Lenny Goldstein will

continue to provide us with quality speakers as chairman of the Author Talks Committee. Additionally, Peggy Sweeney, as the new book sale committee chair, has hit the ground running when it comes to the spring book sale in May and other fund raising ventures. And many thanks to Polly Morrison for continuing to edit and publish the quarterly newsletter.

The board meets at 7 pm on the fourth Wednesday of each month in the library's conference room

L Charles "Friar" FitzGerald
President, Friends of Duncan Library

National Poetry Month

By Mark L. Martinez, Duncan Library Assistant

Join us this April as we celebrate National Poetry Month! Check out our display at the Duncan Branch Library, featuring a variety of new poetry books, including: The Penguin Anthology of 20th Century American Poetry edited by Rita Dove; Life on Mars: Poems by Tracy K. Smith; Lessness by Brian Henry; and Culture of One by Alice Notley. In addition to poetry collections for kids and adults, we'll highlight books on how to write poetry. Plus, we'll have some handouts available to help inspire the poet in you (yes, YOU can write a poem!). We'll also have sample poems from National Geographic's forthcoming Book of Animal Poetry, edited by J. Patrick Lewis, U.S. Children's Poet Laureate. Don't forget to sign-up for a free daily poem: <http://www.poets.org/poemADay.php>. And mark your calendar for Poem In Your Pocket Day on April 26, 2012. Select a poem you love, carry it with you, and share! Post a poem on your blog or write some lines on that back of your business card -- it's that simple. Share some inspiring words this April.



Books By My Bedside

This new column features those books that Duncan Staff and Duncan Friends Officers are currently reading. Let us know if you have a book that you'd like to write about and we'll be happy to include it in a future version of the newsletter.

From Leonard Goldstein:

1Q84 by Haruki Murakami

This is the longest yet of Murakami's magic-realism books, and yet I kept turning those 975 pages. Tengo and Aomame, male and female loners who briefly connected as 10-year-olds but went separate ways, are now, 20 years later and unknown to each other, both stranded in a world that looks like their contemporary Tokyo of 1984. Aomame names the world 1Q84 (for "Question") after she looks up one night and sees what no else seems to notice, that there are now two moons in the sky. How Tengo's and Aomame's paths come ever closer to crossing again, and whether they can somehow escape back to one-moon 1984 in spite of the forces arrayed against them, is what propels the book to a tense but ultimately satisfying conclusion.

From Carolyn Harris

Nightwoods by Charles Frazier

Be still my heart. Not since I fell in love with the wonderful use of language by Robertson Davies have I swooned over an author's writing. The story, set in Appalachia, focuses on Luce, who is the caretaker of a lodge and takes in the troubled twins of her murdered sister, and Stubblefield, who has inherited the lodge. There is an old flame to establish the novel's love story. However, the story is edgy and has its grim, disturbing situations and characters.

The Winter Palace by Eva Stachniak

Here is a novel about Russian history told from the point of view of a Polish servant, Varvara, who works her way into the future Catherine the Great's confidence. I enjoyed the way that Stachniak made Varvara such a compelling character, and I was fascinated by the tales of palace intrigue, hiding places, trading of secrets, and, of course, betrayals.

From L Charles "Friar" FitzGerald

Catherine the Great by Peter Massie

While I already knew something about this minor German princess who travelled to Russia at the age of fourteen and became one of the greatest leaders in history, there was much I didn't know. This extensively researched and wide ranging book answered all my questions. I am a huge fan of Peter Massie's books because his subject matter is always interesting and is presented in an almost conversational style. A must read for anyone interested in Russian history.

Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson

Based on more than forty interviews with Jobs over a two year period as well as interviews with more than a hundred family members, friends, adversaries, competitors and colleagues, this riveting, well written biography of an intense and not always likable personality is a compelling read. Isaacson engagingly captures Job's obsession and passion for perfection at what Jobs labeled "the intersection of technology and liberal arts". Highly recommended!

Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand

I know almost nothing about World War II in the Pacific theater (shame on me!) so this true life story made me realize how much I missed. While serving as a bombardier Louie Zamperini's plane was shot down and, after

Continued on pg. 4

Books By My Bedside, Continued from pg. 3

barely surviving on a raft adrift in the ocean for forty-seven days, he was captured by the Japanese. His experiences as a prisoner of war were horrific, but he survived them by dint of sheer willpower and a remarkably positive outlook on life. This former Olympic runner was -and still is at age ninety-seven - a truly amazing person. Very well written and definitely worth reading.

The Sense of an Ending by Julian Barnes

Elegantly written, this thankfully short book of narcissistic ruminations by the self-absorbed protagonist won the Man Booker Prize in 2011. One can only wonder why. (Note: Carolyn Harris seconds this sentiment.)

From Pat Ryckman:

The Breaking Wave by Nevil Shute.

I picked up a copy for my last airplane trip and was hooked by the second page. The narrator, Alan Duncan, badly wounded while serving as a World War II fighter pilot, returns to Australia to take over the operation of his family's sheep station – a role his elder brother would have played had he not died at Normandy. Alan arrives to learn that the parlor maid, on whom his elderly parents have grown to depend, has just committed suicide. What follows is mystery, adventure, love and war all wrapped up in a tight plot set during the secret build-up to the Normandy invasion.

Nevil Shute was born and educated in England but emigrated to Australia after WWII. Following a notable career as an aircraft engineer he began writing and produced some of the best-selling novels of the 1950s and 1960s. Most of his books are still in print today because he was just such a good storyteller. His war experiences, technical background and his love of Australia are all evident in his books and at least five have been made into movies including the post-apocalyptic "On the Beach," starring Gregory Peck and Ava Gardner. My personal favorite, and the book that got me interested in reading all Shute's other books was "A Town Like Alice." An excellent PBS Masterpiece Theater miniseries was based on this story of an English woman and an Australian soldier who meet as prisoners of war in the Malayan jungle.

If you like a good old-fashioned story packed with adventure and sometimes a bit of mystery, check out any of Nevil Shute's vintage novels from your Duncan Library.

From Martha-Helene Stapleton

A Journey with Two Maps by Eavan Boland

Eavan Boland gave a reading at the Folger Library on March 5, where I picked up this memoir about becoming a woman poet. Almost ten years ago, I was introduced to Boland's and she stood out to me then for her writing about the heroic in the everyday, in a voice accessible and resonant like Robert Frost's. Now I enjoy reading her work because the topics she chooses feel more relevant at the day's end: motherhood, marriage, myth, and living between cultures. In the preface she writes, "This is a book of being and becoming. It is about being a poet. It is also about the long process of becoming one." If you are new to her poetry, I recommend you read *The Pomegranate*, *Unheroic*, *Quarantine*, and *The Emigrant Irish*, all found in *New Collected Poems*.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you are interested in becoming a more active Friend, we need a Beautification/Landscaping Chair, Teen Programs Chair, and Social Activities Chair. Please contact duncanlibraryfriends@gmail.com.

Friends Funds at Work

By Carolyn Harris, Treasurer, Duncan Friends

Here's a summary of income for January and February 2012 and how the Friends have used funds thus far in 2012 to support Duncan Library:

Income		Expenses	
Membership Donations	345	Author Talks	42
Other Donations	110	Library Requested Materials (Children's)	62
Bank Interest	57	Staff Development (ALA & PLA)	341
Total	\$512	Book Club Anniversary Celebration	29
		Operating/Fundraising Expenses	203
		Total	\$677

Book Sale Serendipity

By Marilyn Doherty, Duncan Librarian

Given my house stuffed with books, I should really confine myself to donating items, and refrain from visiting the Duncan Book Sale. However, I probably have lots of company when I say that only an out-of-town trip would keep me away, which would be much more expensive than buying a few books that I simply can't do without.

Usually I pick up a few fiction or mystery titles that I missed when they were popular. I remember being enthralled by *The English Patient* about 4 years after it came out, and discovering to my surprise that the author, Michael Ondaatje, was a Sri Lankan immigrant to Toronto. I went on to read his biography, and another of his novels set around the construction of Toronto's Bloor St. Bridge, a familiar sight from my childhood.

Last fall's book sale provided a different kind of discovery. I picked up a book entitled *Capon Valley Sampler* simply because it had Capon Valley in the title and we have a

cabin in that area of West Virginia. I didn't stop to check whether it was a collection of stories or of recipes, but just thought it might be a good addition to the shelf of books we keep for rainy or cold vacation days.

I later realized I had purchased a gem with particular relevance to the very close neighborhood of our property. The author, former Labor Secretary Willard Wirtz, had bought a farmhouse on the same road sometime in the 1960s. Intrigued by the stories of the families nearby, many with roots for several generations, he started researching the history of the community of Yellow Spring, West Virginia, the cluster of homes and farms around the intersection of River Road and State Rte 259. In 1990, he published the results of his work as the series of essays in this book.

George Washington, as a teenager, had been part of the original team of surveyors of the area, when it was still part of

Virginia and owned by Lord Fairfax. He kept a daily diary of his work and experiences, expressing considerable disdain for Germanic settlers, whose manner of living he looked down upon. Perhaps he had communication difficulties as well. The surveying was to establish boundaries of farmed areas, and then to claim a token rent for Lord Fairfax, who was fearful of losing his huge land grant. The essays go on to cover the lives of some of the prominent families of the area, the establishment (and loss) of schools, a tannery, a general store and a post office, which sold a few stamps per month. I was fascinated to be learning the background of places I had just walked by for years.

In short, mine was the perfect home for a book on this somewhat obscure area, and the Duncan Friends Book Sale made the match! Your match could be waiting too! Details on the Duncan Spring Book Sale appear on page 1 of the newsletter.

Author Talk by Ted Pulliam: *Historic Alexandria: An Illustrated History*

By Leonard Goldstein, Author Talks Committee Chair

What was it like to live in Alexandria 250 years ago? Ted Pulliam—lawyer, author, and resident of Alexandria for over thirty years—presented some answers to a packed house at the Duncan Library on March 19, in an author talk about his book *Historic Alexandria: An Illustrated History*. After he moved here with his wife Molly in 1980, Ted became interested in the historical aspects of the town he saw around him, and his expertise grew with each article he published. He was approached by the Office of Historical Alexandria to collect his research into a book about Alexandria's history from prehistoric to present times. Ted traced the history from Margaret Brent's land grant of 1654 up to the present revival and flourishing of Del Ray.

Margaret Brent administered her lands, including most of present-day Old Town, because, having taken a vow of chastity, she had never married; if she had, her husband would have automatically come into possession of her property. In 1669 the land passed to John Alexander, for whose family our city was ultimately named, in a purchase that also included the land on which National Airport, Arlington Cemetery, and the Pentagon are now located.

Alexandria itself was founded in 1749, just before relations between the colonists and the mother country started to grow tense. The spirit of rebellion was, if not actually initiated, then certainly exacerbated by the Stamp Act of 1765, which put a tax, and a tax stamp, on basically everything made of or containing paper. After protests by the colonies, Parliament yielded and withdrew the Stamp Act, but soon replaced it with the Townshend Act, another tax-everything attempt which was especially burdensome in its tax on—you guessed it—tea. And we all know what happened then. During the Revolution, Alexandria was not actually attacked by British troops, but a British sloop of war, the *Savage*, stopped at Mount Vernon in 1781, seizing a boat and 17 slaves.

Post-revolution Alexandria went into a sort of limbo in 1801, when it was made part of the District of Columbia but was not eligible for economic development. It was retroceded to Virginia in 1847 but even while it was part of D.C. a few businesses flourished, including, unfortunately, Franklin & Armfield slave dealers, established at 1350 Duke St. in 1828. Business was good—1835 receipts alone came to \$24 million—but oddly, even though slave-holding at that time was considered respectable, slave-dealing, though quite legal, was not. Tensions over slavery built up and finally came to a head with Lincoln's election in 1860. Virginians, though originally not in favor of secession, balked at the prospect of providing men for a Union Army to battle the seceding southern states and they joined the rebellion.

Ted finished with a brief history of our own area, which grew up around a trolley line proposed in 1894 to run from downtown Alexandria into Washington. Property developers Wood and Harmon offered two tracts of land for housing near the line, which ran along what is now Commonwealth Avenue. A plot of land for a house cost \$143, and since there were no building covenants the two tracts, named St. Elmo and Del Ray, eventually were filled with a wide variety of houses in whatever style the owner preferred (and could afford). The area between the two tracts was occupied by a race track, the St. Asaph, which went into decline after the Virginia legislature banned betting on races, though for a while wagers were telegraphed to Harpers Ferry in West Virginia, where it was legal to place bets. In 1908 St. Elmo and Del Ray incorporated as the town of Potomac; the town hall is still visible on Windsor Avenue. Potomac was annexed by a growing City of Alexandria in 1930, and there we are now. The Mount Vernon Avenue of 1940 was iconic of small-town life: the present-day Yoga in Daily Life was the Palm movie theater (matinee tickets were a dime plus a penny tax); there was a Safeway grocery where Mancini's Bakery is now; and the building which now houses Cheesetique and Caboose Cafe then sported a bowling alley in the basement, till the building burned in 1945. The neighborhood later languished until it was revived to its present blend of small-town informality and trendiness. Ted closed his talk by dating the start of Del Ray's revival with the opening of the St. Elmo Coffee Pub in 1996.

Del Ray Citizens Association Meet-n-Greet

By Leonard Goldstein, Author Talk Committee Chair

Because of a critical concatenation of catastrophes among the Duncan staff, I volunteered to go to the March 12 Meet-n-Greet. I went with 15 minutes' warning as Duncan's sole representative, armed only with a stack of pamphlets in Spanish and English, a picture-frame slide show with no words at all, and a bag of peanut-butter M&Ms that spoke a universal language. The turnout was quite good, and the city's representatives were especially prevalent, everyone from police and fire to recycling and pet adoptions. I spotted animal welfare, farmers' market, schools, music, bikes...everything that gives Del Ray its trendy and yet neighborly, small-town ambience.

Several people stopped by my table who weren't just interested in the M&Ms. They broke down into two main groups, people with small children who knew about and used the library, and those without kids (maybe a dog or cat), who said they always intended to go and really would someday. A subgroup, fairly small, uses the library to download ebooks.

My table was sandwiched between that of the Del Ray Music Festival, manned by Patty Moran and her daughter Kate, and the Del Ray Artisans, with a genial older fellow named Marlin Lord at the helm. "Do you know the Duncan Library?" I asked him. "I'm the architect who designed the original building," he

responded. So I guess the answer was yes. It turns out he also did the extension to Mt. Vernon Elementary. Tim Lovain, our once and (he hopes) future councilman, came around, and then Jim Moran dropped by to check on niece Kate's band concerts and shake a few hands.

I gave away a number of leaflet), people admired the picture-frame slide show, no one bad-mouthed the library, and I understand that all the library staff's catastrophes have been seen to, so, to coin a phrase, all's well that ends well. Except now I need a new bag of M&Ms.

Author Talk by David Stewart: *American Emperor: Aaron Burr's Challenge to Jefferson's America*

By Linda Morefield, Duncan Friends Secretary

David O. Stewart, Washington lawyer and author, spoke about his latest book, *American Emperor: Aaron Burr's Challenge to Jefferson's America* at the Duncan Library Author Talk, Monday night, December 12, 2011.

Aaron Burr is the bad boy of American politics, and Stewart's book reads like a gripping adventure story. Burr was a man of immense personal magnetism and

leadership who, when thwarted in his ambitions, looked to other, perhaps treasonous, ways of exercising leadership and obtaining power. The tale that Stewart tells, in his book and in his talk, complete with terrific maps and pictures of the major characters--villains, heroes, and those who wavered between the two extremes--includes stories of an American military leader who was a double agent, a

sitting vice-president indicted for murder in two states, and an American president who felt that it would be OK if the nation split into two countries; he would wish the west well.

The audience gave the speaker and his program rave reviews, and requested future author talks about American history.

Gangsters, Guns and Femme Fatales: Twelve Months of Film Noir at the Duncan Library

by Walter Gross, Duncan Friends Member



A laconic private eye sits in a cantina in Mexico where he has been sent to find and return the mistress of a vicious gangster. When the detective first beholds the beautiful fugitive entering the dark bar and framed in sunlight, he loses all sense of loyalty to his client and plots to run away with her, a decision that leads to murder and betrayal and seals his doom. This kind of plot populates the world of classic Film Noir, movies produced in the Forties and Fifties set in a dark, pessimistic atmosphere and replete with dishonesty, deceit, murder, and betrayal -- where the moral compasses of ordinary people are disabled by greed, lust, and self-deception.

Beginning this summer, the Friends of the Duncan Library, in conjunction with St. Elmo's Coffee Pub, will sponsor a series of some of the very best examples of the Film Noir genre that endure in spite of their pessimistic themes because they are the products of skillful writers, talented directors, imaginative cinematographers, and many of the brightest stars of their era. They are superior entertainments worthy of watching over and over and discussing with fellow film lovers.

Starting June 6 and continuing thereafter on the first Wednesday of the month, these movies will be screened in the Duncan Library meeting room starting at 7:00 PM with discussions to follow at 9:00 at St. Elmo's, a short two blocks away at 2300 Mt. Vernon Avenue. All showings are free and open to the public.

The series kicks off with the film that most film scholars consider the first of the Noir genre: *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) starring Humphrey Bogart as the cynical private detective, Sam Spade, and Mary Astor as his duplicitous client, and directed by John Huston. The movie is notable for the cinematic debut of one of the most enduring icons of the Noir genre, the *femme fatale*, i.e., a beautiful and amoral woman who seduces men to do her evil bidding and leads them to destruction.

The series is scheduled to conclude with the movie considered to be the final film of the classical era of Noir: Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil* (1958). Welles not only wrote and directed the film, but also cast himself in the lead role of Hank Quinlan, a former honest and dedicated policeman in an unnamed city on the United States/Mexico border.

Other films planned for the series include the following:

- *Double Indemnity* starring Barbara Stanwyck, Fred MacMurray, and Edward G. Robinson. Directed by Billy Wilder. Based on a novel by James M. Cain.
- *The Postman Always Rings Twice* starring Lana Turner and John Garfield. Directed by Tay Garnett. Based on a novel by James M. Cain.
- *Out of the Past* starring Robert Mitchum, Jane Greer, and Kirk Douglas. Directed by Jacques Tourneur.
- *The Killers* starring Burt Lancaster, Ava Gardner, and Edmund O'Brien. Directed by Robert Siodmack. Based on a short story by Ernest Hemingway.
- *In a Lonely Place* starring Humphrey Bogart and Gloria Graham. Directed by Nicholas Ray.
- *The Big Heat* starring Glenn Ford, Gloria Grahame, and Lee Marvin. Directed by Fritz Lang.
- *Criss Cross* starring Burt Lancaster, Ava Gardner, and Dan Duryea. Directed by Robert Siodmack.
- *The Big Sleep* starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. Directed by Howard Hawks. Based on a novel by Raymond Chandler.
- *The Asphalt Jungle* starring Sam Jaffe, Sterling Hayden, Louis Calhern, and Marilyn Monroe. Directed by John Huston.
- *Kiss Me Deadly* starring Ralph Meeker, Cloris Leachman, and Gaby Rodgers. Directed by Robert Aldrich.

Author Talk by Hillary Peak *Wings of Hope*

By Leonard Goldstein, Author Talks Committee Chair

How well do any of us know our parents? That is one of the questions Hillary Peak raises in her memoir-novel *Wings of Hope*, and one which forms a theme of the book she discussed at the February 15, 2012 Author Talk. Hillary in her other life is a successful lawyer and an Assistant Attorney General at the DC Office of the Attorney General—but, she hopes, not for much longer, if her writing career takes off. One day while on a job interview, sitting in a chicken-footed chair at an egg-shaped conference table in a law office filled with pop art pictures of Warhol soup cans, Lichtenstein crying-girl love-comic illustrations and other "scary, suicidal" art, she suddenly felt the urge to do something else with her life, like become a writer and produce works that people would actually enjoy reading—a very rare occurrence in a law office's output (except for the occasional will bequeathing a fortune to a deserving heir). Hillary's first book, *Cappuccino Is the Answer for Job Dissatisfaction*, was the result of her disastrous first two days at that workplace.

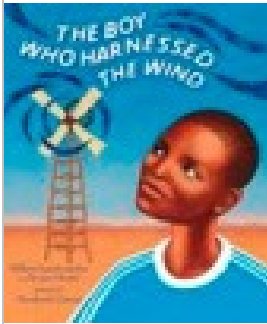
With her second novel Hillary has moved to a more personal level, blending her own father's story into a fictionalized memoir of Sol Weinstein's life, as revealed to his estranged daughter Julia, or Jules, when she moves from San Francisco back to New York to be with him in the last few months of his struggle with inoperable cancer.

Hillary read an account from the book in which Jules and Sol drive out to the New Jersey suburbs to visit his boyhood home. Sol tells the story of how he and his friends, climbing down the Palisades, became stuck on the cliff and had to be rescued by the fire department, and the never previously revealed account of how, in a childhood game of darts, his brother had injured Sol's eye and how they had then made the loss of that eye inevitable by not telling their mother until two days later, when it was too late to save. Sol goes on to explain that it was that loss which first aroused his compassion for the handicapped, which resulted in his studying medicine in Switzerland. As Sol tells it, the doctor with whom he worked conveniently had an office at the base of a horrendous ski trail, and people would "fall into the office"; sometimes a specially trained St. Bernard would lead the doctor to injured skiers on the slopes.

After the reading Hillary recounted some of her own experiences and lessons learned in becoming an author. She makes a point of writing an hour a day no matter what. When she finished *Cappuccino Is the Answer for Job Dissatisfaction* she submitted it to an agent who asked her for a rewrite to make it more salable, and, she confesses, she "stupidly" refused. She ended up selling 1,000 copies of the book. Now she publishes directly to Kindle and has sold 10,000 copies of *Wings of Hope*. The key is to get a trade publication (rather than friends or amateurs) to review it and bring it to readers' attention.. A trade review can cost the author \$500 or more, and a favorable review is by no means guaranteed, but it can kick off a successful career, as happened to Jack Canfield, author of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series.

Hillary now seems well on her way to a writing career, having just finished her third book, a legal thriller entitled *Justice Scorned*, about the hunt for a leaker of nuclear energy secrets (Hillary adds that the internet is a great help in research, as well as friends with expertise in the area). If her third novel does well, Hillary may never have to look at another soup can painting again.

All Alexandria Reads @ Duncan Library



All Alexandria Reads returns for its fifth year of community-wide reading and discussion. This year's selection is "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind" by William Kamkwamba, the story of a boy living in poverty in Malawi who follows his dream to help his entire community. A picture book version of the story, with the same title, is available for younger readers. Everyone is encouraged to read the book, discuss it with family and friends and participate in any of the programs offered by the Library during the month of

April. Programs scheduled for the Duncan Branch include:

Virginia Science Museum Presents Alternative Energy – Sat., April 14, 11 am (Grades 3-6)

How does a photovoltaic panel convert light energy to electrical energy? Find out how in this program that explores and highlights different renewable and nonrenewable sources of energy. Attendance is limited, please call 703-746-1793 or email kmaier@alexandria.lib.va.us to register.

Science and Stories – Mon., April 16, 3:30-4:40 pm (Grades K-2, limited to 25 children)

Listen to a story about Kondi who builds a toy out of wire, then design and build your own toy using found materials.

Peace Corps Information Session – Mon., April 16, 7 pm (teens and adults)

Learn about opportunities to help communities around the world as a Peace Corps volunteer.

Bill Jenkins World of Music – Tues., April 17, two performances at 10:30 am and 11:30 am (ages 2 and up)

A musical performance featuring instruments from Africa.

Duncan Book Discussion Group – Wed., April 18, 7 pm (adults)

The group will be discussing "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind." Everyone is welcome to join in!

Tales of the Griot – Sat., April 21, 2 pm (all ages)

Musician Atmupan shares West African stories while playing instruments unique to that area. Learn about the importance of drums and storytellers as a means of communication in traditional African society.

Wind Power – Mon., April 23, 3:30 – 4:30 pm (grades 3-5, limited to 25 children)

Design a model vehicle using a set of simple materials and make it go using wind power, or your own breath! When you are satisfied with your "Puff Mobile," take it to the starting line to race against time.

Check the Alexandria Library website for information on programs at our other branches.

About the book, from *Publishers Weekly*:

American readers will have their imaginations challenged by Kamkwamba's description of life in Malawi, a famine-stricken nation in southern Africa.

Witnessing his family's struggle, Kamkwamba's curiosity leads him to pursue the improbably dream of using "electric wind" to harness energy for the farm.

Kamkwamba's efforts were of course derided; salvaging a motley collection of materials, from his father's broken bike to his mother's clothes line, he was often greeted to the tune of "Look, the madman has come with his garbage." This exquisite tale strips life down to its barest essentials, and once there finds reason for hopes and dreams.

Author Talk by Tom Kaufman: *Steal the Show*

By Leonard Goldstein, Author Talks Committee Chair

Willis Gidney is not exactly a film-noir private eye, but he's as close as you can get for a private investigator working in present-day Washington and Northern Virginia. He's also the creation of local award-winning cinematographer, writer and jazz bassist Tom Kaufman, who introduced his second Gidney novel, *Steal the Show*, to a at his Author Talk on January 30, 2012. Tom had spoken to our group a little over a year previously about his first Willis Gidney novel, *Drink the Tea*, and he took this opportunity not only to speak about the book but to give some background on his characters and writing methods.

Steal the Show is a novel about a problem that Tom, as a film maker, is well acquainted with: pirating films for illegal sale and distribution. The first chapter, from which Tom read excerpts, starts with an amusing yet instructive description of Willis breaking into a warehouse near National Airport to collect information on a small-time DVD-copying racket. But soon it develops into a much deeper case—a group not unlike the MPAA film-rating organization is involved in a high-tech encryption and distribution scheme at a film premiere at the Uptown Theater which leads to double-crosses, triple-crosses, and murder, with Willis deeply entangled and unsure of whom, if anyone, he can trust, including the people who hired him. Well, that's Hollywood for you.

After the reading, Tom spoke about his characters and writing. He decided to make Willis start out as a homeless orphan with no background, since he was too lazy to invent a backstory, but it turned out even homeless characters need to be researched, so it was just as much work in the end. And when Willis decides in *Steal the Show*, against all odds, to adopt a homeless baby himself, the book turns from pure mystery to a character study of Willis. Working out plots isn't easy for Tom, and sometimes when he is asked where he

gets his ideas he'll claim that a mail-order business sends him a packet of them every month. He's had listeners come up after a talk and ask him for that company's email address.

Some authors lay out a strict outline of the plot, chapter by chapter, and write their stories to flesh it out. Tom prefers to wing it as he writes, comparing the process to jazz improvisation: first you learn the rules, and then you can have fun with it. So he writes the story, and only then draws up the outline from that—publishers insist on having an outline. One advantage of winging it is that if Tom doesn't know what's going to happen next he can be pretty sure his readers don't either.

Tom's own favorite mystery writers include Edgar Allan Poe, who invented the idea of a private detective in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, and Lawrence Sanders, a writer whose collection of essays on how to write, *Spider, Spin Me a Web*, is invaluable for the beginning writer. With practice the process of writing becomes easier. Tom's first two novels took him two years each. His third Willis Gidney mystery, *Face the Music*, which begins in 1942 Poland during the Holocaust, has taken only six months. Tom gave a few tips for writers, such as not looking at the monitor while you type. Just let your creative side write without letting your critical faculty interfere—and never stop writing at the end of a scene. How can you make sure your dialog sounds "real?" Read it out loud, with an ear for the characters' locutions and rhythms.

It will be interesting to see how the story of Willis Gidney continues to play out as the series continues.

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Friends of Duncan Library Membership Update

By Gay Hurst, Membership Chair

The membership roll has been growing. Since December 1, 2011, twenty-three new memberships (34 people) have been entered for Friends of Duncan Library. Seven of those have offered to work with either selling or sorting books for the Book Sale. One has offered to help plan social activities and two indicated an interest in the Beautification Committee. FODL is also delighted to have one person who is interested in book clubs and another volunteering to work at the research desk or with shelving books.

FODL encourages you to promote our organization with your book clubs and with all your friends. Being a member of FODL benefits all of our community.

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