Library Foundation President to Step Down

Dale LaCasella is many things: a mother, a grandmother, an artist, a former lawyer and now, the former President of the Altadena Library Foundation, a non-profit organization she helped to establish in order to raise money for the library programs and facilities. She and her husband, architect James Vitale, moved to Altadena in 1993 and they both loved the community. In 2007, Dale was looking for a way to give something back when she saw a notice seeking to fill a vacancy on the Library Board of Trustees. She applied, was appointed, and has been very involved ever since. “I love the library. I use the library. It seemed like a good fit,” said Dale. She served as a Board Trustee from 2007 to 2013.

Dale championed the idea of forming a Foundation, acknowledging “It’s not just about me. A lot of people have worked hard and continue to work very hard to keep the Altadena Library growing and improving. I am glad I could help.” Dale served as one of the founding Foundation Board Members from 2009 to present, and was the President of the Board for the last year. Dale facilitated several successful grants for the Library, including from the Pasadena Community Foundation, and the Annenberg Foundation through the Alchemy Plus Leadership Seminar. In addition, Dale spearheaded Art on Millionaire’s Row and led the volunteer committee to organize the annual event, which debuted in 2010. This festival has been a great addition to the celebration of arts in Altadena and at the Library.

“In my opinion, the Library is the heart of the community. The Library will always be about books and it will always be about learning, but it is so much more! I suspect that most people don’t know that we now offer business services, including passport services,” said Dale. “I’m not going away,” says Dale. “I’ll always be a supporter of the Altadena Library... being part of all this... it has been a pleasure.”

“Dale’s contributions to our Library, including her and her husband Jim’s early leadership in championing the upgrading and expansion of the Main Library Building, will be reflected in our efforts for years to come,” said Meredith McKenzie, president of the Library’s Board of Trustees. Dave Herman, a long standing member of the Foundation and chair of the successful 2013 Parcel Tax campaign, will serve as new Foundation President.

Water Conservation Demonstration Garden About to Sprout!

Cicero said, “If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need.” Clearly Meredith McKenzie, President of the Altadena Library Trustees, agrees. Since last year, she has been working on a plot (pun intended) to convert part of the landscape at the main Altadena Library into a water conservation garden. According to Meredith, the Library partnered with the Foothill Municipal Water District to apply for two grants to help transform the area on the east side of the library. The great news is that the Library received both grants. One is for $3,000 for turf removal and the other is for $25,000 for design and building of the garden, and for educational programs focused on the garden. The turf removal grant comes from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the larger grant comes from the County of Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Dept., through the Competitive Excess Funds Grant program organized by Supervisor Michael Antonovich. The library has hired January Nordman to design and implement the garden. She will be aided by the LA Conservation Corps. The LACC employs young and at-risk youth. Clearly, this project is like a pebble in a pond — the rings that race out from it involve the time and talent of many area people. It is Meredith’s hope that the garden will help the Library conserve water, that it will encourage life-long learning, and that it will be a beautiful meditation space. Work will begin before the end of the year and yes, local volunteers will be needed. Watch this newsletter for updates.
From the Director

Wow! What a year we’ve had. It began last November with overwhelming support (85.52%! ) from our community for our 10 year parcel tax extension and it is ending with what we hope will be a full house for our annual Holiday Celebration on December 2, at 6 PM with the Joel Taylor Jazz Trio featuring Jeff Richman and Dean Taba.

In between, we have taken many steps to improve our library by creating a space that is welcoming and inclusive. We have added new LED lighting, more areas for collaboration, and comfortable seating to make our space physically more friendly. We have removed or lowered many of the access barriers to our collection. There is no longer a fee for reserving items, the fee for inter-library loan has been lowered, and we allow hold requests on all items. Staff has worked tirelessly to upgrade the collection so that it is more relevant and we hope you can now find more of what you are looking for. All ages can now experience the library in new ways with our increased presentations, classes, and cultural activities.

Our goal for the next year is to continue to expand what we offer you. We will be reaching out to you to invite you to tell us about your hopes, dreams, and wishes for the library and for the community as a whole.

In the meantime, the staff of the Altadena Library wants to thank you for your support. We wish you and your family a joyful, happy, and healthy holiday season and a prosperous New Year!

Branch Notes: Writer to Writer Challenge & Winter Crafts

This fall our adult literacy learners were encouraged to participate in the Writer to Writer Challenge, a writing contest sponsored by the Southern California Library Literacy Network (SCLLN). Let’s Read Altadena is a part of that network. The Challenge is to read a book and write a short letter to the author (living or deceased) telling them how the book impacted their life. Our adult learners won’t be doing this alone, since their tutors will help them through the thinking and writing process. In March, prizes will be awarded in four categories and winners will be chosen by a panel of adult learners. Selected writers will have their letters published in a book and on the SCLLN website.

Branch Crafts

On November 19th, children enjoyed turning cookies into turkeys. Some even made monster turkeys with four eyes! Our next children’s craft event is Thursday, December 17 at 3:30. We will be making waffle cones into Christmas trees by decorating them with candy. Participants can give them as gifts or just eat them! Join us!
Children: Something for Everyone!

The Altadena Library was one of nearly 2000 libraries around the world that celebrated International Games Day on November 21. Each year libraries are encouraged to reconnect communities around the educational, recreational, and social value of games. We invited families to stop by for old favorites and to try some new ones!

LEGO Club took over the children’s room for its final meeting this year, but the kids didn’t seem to mind! LEGO club will resume in January after a brief break during December.

It’s time for another reading program! Our 8th annual Winter Reading Program will take place December 14 -- January 31. To participate, kids check out and read a book, then write or draw a brief book review. Turn the book review in for prizes! Turn in a minimum of three book reviews and receive a coupon for a free bowl of soup from Altadena’s own O Happy Day Natural Grocery Store and Cafe!

Our first Sensory StoryTime for children with autism and sensory challenges began in October and has been very well received. During StoryTime children are accepted as they are and it’s okay if they don’t sit still or participate. We try to entice them to join in and model ways for parents to engage with their children at home. We focus on progress not mastery and many of the activities are modeled after the Center for Developing Kid’s Circle Time. We’ve capped registration at 10 children, and we are full! We are looking forward to adding more programs that serve children with special needs.

Cassandra Stearns

Teens: Volunteers Are Our Secret Sauce!

Teen services offered nine programs in October and another four or five in November. We can only do that because of our great Teen Activities Council. For example, TAC member Juan Castro, had the Playstation 4 up and running for our "smashing" gaming event. Ann Elias assisted with many of the teen programs, including the Game Design program, Filmmaking and Piñata-making. Dina Zanrosso, our wonderful story time aide, helped with set-up, clean-up, and photography during weekly Preschool story times. In October alone, 11 volunteers donated 68.5 hours to help make our library the fun place it is. Thanks everyone!

Carrie Wilson

Adults: Spanish Wine Tasting Has Hints of History

Over 100 community residents gathered at the Altadena Library on November 20 for a sip of local wine culture. Area wine scholar Stuart Byles regaled the local connoisseurs with tales of Los Angeles wine history, and in particular, the role of Altadena, Pasadena, and the farther-reaching San Gabriel Valley in that crisp, full-bodied, aromatic history.

The presentation was followed by an extraordinary wine tasting event, hosted by the Altadena Ale & Wine House. The tasting provided attendees the opportunity to savor seven Spanish wines, from floral Cava whites to fruity Crianza reds. The wine was enjoyed with an assortment of Spanish cheeses, including herb chevre, manchego, and gorgonzola, all served with thinly-sliced baguettes and chorizo sausages. Byles was on hand during the tasting to mingle with participants and sign copies of his book, Los Angeles Wine. Michelle Zack, local author and historian, said of the presentation and tasting, “This is a marvelous event. To see the library so full of people who might otherwise not be here is a wonderful thing.”

The event was sponsored in part by the Latino Americans: 500 Years of History program series, which was made possible through a grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities and the American Library Association; donations from the Altadena Friends and Foundation; and Gail and Judah Casburn of the Altadena Ale & Wine House.

Ryan Roy
**Babble, Blather and Buzz**

Local author **R. Wesley Edwards** took two buses to come to the library to see his science fiction book *Tyzmon: The Last BladeHunter: Tales from Archangel Valley* on the shelf.

**Librarian to the rescue!** A lady from Korea came to the reference desk to ask about classes for improving her English. She had been sent to us from another city’s library. We were able to refer her to our **Bob Lucas Memorial Branch Library and Literacy Center** which offers an adult literacy program and a Basic ESL (English as a Second Language) program. So happy we could help.

Nice things we heard from parents about **Sensory StoryTime:**

“Thank you guys so much for putting this on! It’s really a wonderful thing, and so needed!”

“I would like to thank you for the valuable programs you provide our community.”

A focused young witch parked her broom on the table and proceeded to conjure up some incantations and charms. Even little witches know they can stop by the Altadena Library for a spell!

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**Program Highlights for December!**

**Open Studios Art Tour**

The Open Studios Art Tour returns to the main Altadena Library on December 5, from 2 PM to 6 PM. Capture [in Motion] features Valerie Daval sketching dancers while they perform. Also on exhibit will be the photography of Alejandra Engelberg which will made during the 4th Open Studios Art Tour. Valérie will create and exhibit new drawings of dancers. This event is part of the fifth Open Studios Tour of art studios hosted at locations throughout Pasadena and Altadena.

**Graham Cracker House Decorating Party**

On Tuesday, December 8 at 6:30 PM, the Barbara J. Pearson Community Room will be transformed into a icing wonderland. Bring your family to build and decorate "gingerbread" houses out of Graham crackers, frosting, and candy. Materials are provided.

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**What Are You Reading?**

**Roxanne** is reading *The Language of Bees* by Laurie King (a past No Guilt Book Club choice). This, the ninth book featuring Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes, finds the couple returning to their Sussex home for what they hope is some rest and relaxation. But between the disappearance of an entire hive of bees and the arrival of Damian Adler, there is little of either. **Roxanne** enjoys this mystery series set in England between World Wars.

**Ben**, under the watchful eye of Charlie Brown, curls up to read *Middle School: Just My Rotten Luck* by James Patterson. This is the seventh book in the Middle School series, and Rafe heads back to the place his misadventures began: the dreaded Hills Village Middle School, where he’s now being forced to take "special" classes. He also finds himself joining the school’s football team—alongside his main tormenter, Miller the Killer! But Rafe has grand plans for a better year. If Rafe is successful, he might have to deal with something completely new: popularity! **Ben** likes this book because it’s funny.
Hot Titles! New for the Holidays!

ADULT

A Christmas Escape / Anne Perry
For countless readers, Christmastime means a delicious new holiday mystery from New York Times bestselling author Anne Perry. A Christmas Escape, transports us to the Mediterranean island of Stromboli for an unconventional Yuletide adventure — and an unforgettable volcanic encounter. Oh, and then there is the matter of the dead body and who in the group of hotel guests is the killer.

A Winter Stroll / Elin Hilderbrand
In a sequel to last year’s holiday novel Winter Street, Hilderbrand delves deeper into the emotional lives of the Quinn clan. Their inn on the lovely island of Nantucket, MA, is flourishing again, and the family has mostly recovered from the drama of last Christmas. However, the holiday season seems to be a magnet for former spouses and lovers, whose reappearances cause all kinds of strife and uncertainty among the Quinn clan.

Vegan Holiday Cooking from Candle Café / Joy Pierson
Drawing on their extensive catering experience, the co-owners and executive chefs of New York City’s high-end vegan restaurant Candle Cafe share recipes meant to satisfy all holiday guests, including omnivores and herbivores. With fresh, inventive menus for Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s Eve, and many other holidays, this cookbook blends favorite traditions with a modern sensibility.

CHILDREN

A Shiloh Christmas / Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
Christmas is coming and Marty and his rescued pup Shiloh are sure glad about that — for their town is sure low on love and understanding and they hope that the joy of the holiday will bring with it the generosity of spirit that’s so lacking. Naylor’s fourth book in the Newbery Award-winning Shiloh series is full of heart-thudding suspense, as well as comfort and joy.

TEENS

Winter / Marissa Meyers
Princess Winter is admired by the Lunar people for her grace and kindness, and despite the scars that mar her face, her beauty is said to be even more breathtaking than that of her stepmother, Queen Levana. Winter despises her stepmother, and knows she won’t approve of her feelings for her childhood friend — the handsome palace guard, Jacin. Can Cinder, Scarlet, Cress, and Winter defeat Levana and find their happily ever afters? This is the thrilling conclusion to the Lunar Chronicles series.

Laureen A. McCoy, Cassandra Stearns & Carrie Wilson

Altadena Library Introduces New IT Manager

Christopher Kellermeyer hit the ground running. He joined the staff just as the library was improving the speed of the internet from Model T to Maserati. Christopher explains, “We just changed the internet backbone to one gigabit from 80 megabits. The additional speed and accessibility is substantial. The project was a great way to get to know the community and the Library, but I could not have done this my very first week had it not been for the meticulous documentation and support of the retiring IT Manager, Steve Marsh, and Mindy Kittay and their project management groundwork.” This additional speed is going to improve the online experience for library patrons and, as Christopher says with a twinkle in his eye, “There’s a lot of good stuff that can go into play now that couldn’t before.”

Christopher came to California from Ohio to become a rhythm guitarist and singer in a Shock Rock band. Lucky for us, our beautiful weather kept him here when the genre faded. He attended Riverside Community College and went on to get his MBA from University of Redlands. He has been fascinated with computers since he got his first one at age 12. “My brother and I dove into it and never came up.” At the age of 13, he was the file operator on a bulletin board service, and at 14, he became the system operator — too young to draw a paycheck so he took his wages in credits. A life in technology seemed to be his destiny. But don’t let this geeky description fool you. You might be surprised to know that Christopher can do a pull-up with 200 pounds attached to his feet! Brains and brawn!
Dance into the Night!
Saturday, January 9  7:00 PM
The Gerry Rothschild Band is returning for our not-to-miss Second Saturday music and food extravaganza. Last year they rocked the library with some of the best music in the Los Angeles area. The Gerry Rothschild Band can swing with classics from Frank and Dean, then ease into Miles, Duke and Dizzy. After that they can stir in some Pop, Rock, R&B or grind out some stompin’ blues to get everyone up and dancing. El Patron, the Altadena Wine and Ale House and Sweeter than Honey will make encore appearances.

L.A. Opera Talk: The Magic Flute!
Saturday, January 16  2:00 PM
Community Educators from the L.A. Opera come to the library to discuss Mozart’s The Magic Flute – an enchanting tale of good versus evil, where love ultimately conquers all. We have the DVD available in the Library, if you want a sneak peek.

No Guilt Book Club:  Funky Grammar and a Dysfunctional Family

Book Club member Hannah highly recommends our non-fiction choice Between You & Me by Mary Norris for its insight and humor. It brought out the inner linguist (and proofreader) in her! This journal of a working editor who has survived -- with eyes open and pencil drawn (a No. 1, of course) -- the world of publishing is part memoir, part grammar guide, and part exposé of The New Yorker. Between You & Me will appeal to readers who want to think more deeply about how they write and how they read.

The Children’s Crusade by Ann Packer is an intriguing and fictional look at the dynamics of a California family over the course of five decades. It reveals how the decisions adults make while parenting have the potential to cause ripples in their children’s lives for years to come. This is also a story of regrets, unfulfilled wishes, fears, things unsaid, and both the power and peril of memory. As member Keith pointed out, "This is a family where nurture mattered so much more than nature." The beauty of the novel comes from the rich characterizations of each member of the Blair family. The characters aren’t completely likeable, but you feel for them, and you want to know what happens to them even after the book has ended.

The Friends of the Library meet on the first Monday of each month (except July and August) at 7:30 pm in the Community Room. You do not have to be a member to attend. For info go to www.altadenalibrary.org/friends-library.

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