



FRIENDS of Decorah Public Library

– Winter 2021 Issue –

DPL CONTINUES TO DIVERSIFY PROGRAMS, SUPPORT FAMILIES

Since March 15, Rachael Button, Decorah Public Library's Children's and Young Adult Librarian, has filmed, uploaded, and published almost 90 videos to YouTube ranging from online storytimes to singalongs to book talks.

"In March and April, there was a lot of interest in virtual programs. We had over 1,000 attendees to our YouTube programs," said Button. "People wanted familiar faces and routines and the library wanted to serve our patrons."

However, as time passed library staff noticed a shift. Views dwindled and Button found herself again pivoting to meet patron needs. "When summer started people wanted more hands-on activities and curbside books instead of digital story times. It was important for us to respond."

Two programs Decorah Public Library has since implemented to meet those needs are Take-and-Make Mondays and Book Bundles. Take-and-Make Monday is a weekly program where families can sign up to pick up an activity bag from the library. Take-and-Make bags include materials and instructions and can be picked up curbside near the ground floor bookdrop of Decorah Public Library. Since June, they've bagged up 1,810 Take-and-Make Monday projects for children and families.

Book Bundles are another new, popular program. Families can fill out a form on the library's website detailing their children's reading interests. Library staff then hand-select customized Book Bundles for the family to pick up and take home via the library's curbside service. In 2020, the library provided over 300 custom book bundles for children and families, containing over 3,000 hand-selected books.

Decorah Public Library continues to offer many digital programs—like providing weekly yoga videos for kids via Facebook, sharing book lists and book recommendations, and putting out a weekly email newsletter for families. However, for Button, and others, the shift to add non-digital program options has been positive.

"It's a joy to get to provide activities and books to kids," says Button. "It's been a year of pivoting, reimagining, and responding...but we're hearing positive feedback from families who have also had to pivot and re-envision their plans. Programs at DPL might look different, but from what we've seen, people in this community are reading, creating, staying curious, and making use of their public library."



Friends of the Decorah Public Library President Karla Brown was presented Emily Feller and daughters Nora and Ayla and dog Nalla with a check for \$1,196.13 from Heidi Betz of the Oneota Co-Op from their took the Tacky the Penguin book walk. Look for future Round Up at the Register fundraiser for Friends held Jan. 4-17. book walks to come!

GETTING TO KNOW THE NEW ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR

By Mark Ruen

DPL Director Kristin Torresdal recently announced that the Library's Administrative Coordinator position, which had been vacant for some time, has been filled with the hiring of Zach Row-Heyveld. Friends of DPL had a chance to meet Zach, and we've invited him to talk a little about himself.

Where did you grow up, and where have you lived?

I grew up in Peoria, IL and went to school at a tiny liberal arts college in southern Illinois. After college, I lived in Iowa City for five years while my wife finished her Ph.D and I finished a Museum Studies program and started my career working in museums. My wife's work took us to Buffalo, NY for two years and I worked in an archive at a college library and in exhibit design and fabrication at the Buffalo Museum of Science.

What brought you to Decorah? How long have you lived here?

We moved to Decorah in 2013 after my wife got a job as a professor in the English department at Luther. For the last 4.5 years, I was the Exhibitions Manager at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum.

What were your first impressions of DPL?

How do you compare it to other libraries you've been familiar with?

I love public libraries. I think they're one of the best ideas we've ever come up with. Getting a library card is usually the first thing I do anytime I move to a new place and I think I got a DPL library card before my internet was even hooked up. While Decorah is definitely the smallest, most rural town I've ever lived in, the library doesn't feel like the library of a small, rural town. I think part of that is the way that Kristin and her team have really worked hard to make the DPL a dynamic community anchor that is constantly adapting

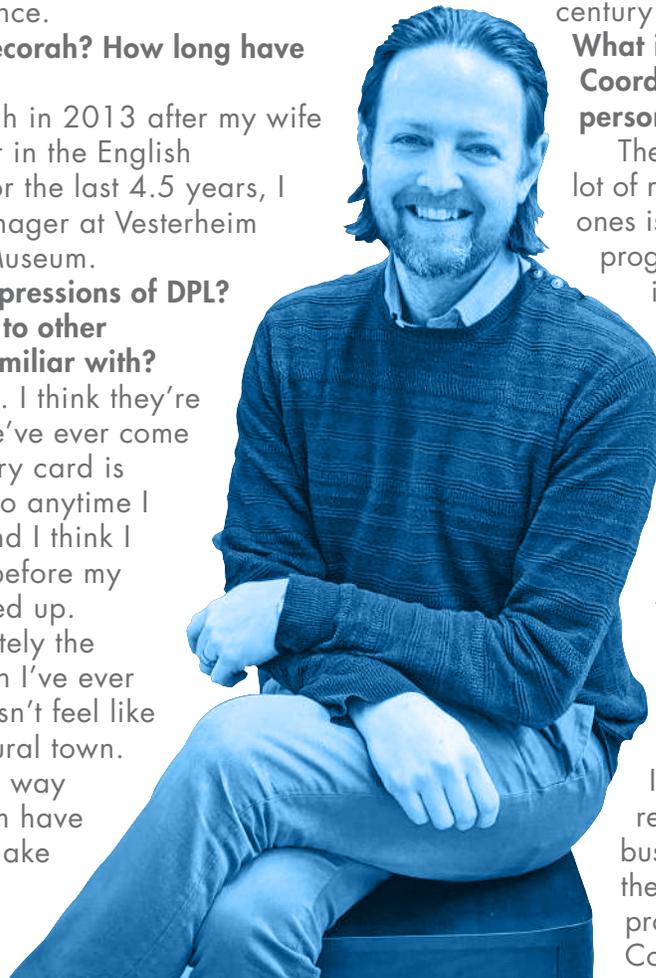
to the needs of its patrons—that's one of many reasons why I'm so excited to join the DPL.

What do you see as the Library's role in the community?

I think the role of the DPL is to provide Decorah and area residents with the tools and resources they need to live rich, fulfilling lives regardless of socioeconomic class or status. I think providing access to information for EVERYONE is one of the most valuable services the DPL offers. That information comes in many forms: powerful narratives and stories that change the way we see the world and help us build empathy for the people around us; nonfiction that challenges our assumptions and worldviews; access to reliable, diverse news sources to help us make sense of what's happening in the world; through conversations and relationships formed in book groups and other programs; access to reliable computers and internet. Historically, this access has primarily been through books, but only because historically, that's the way information has been distributed. While books will continue to be a core component of what the DPL offers, I'm excited to work alongside my amazing colleagues to build the DPL in ways that serve the needs of 21st century library patrons.

What is the role of the Administrative Coordinator? What do you feel you personally bring to the position?

The Administrative Coordinator has a lot of roles at the library. One of the main ones is creating and overseeing all adult programming and services. That's an interesting challenge at this stage of the pandemic. We're currently trying to figure out what mix of high- and low-tech programs we can sustainably offer for the next 6 to 8 months and what level of digital programming will continue once we can safely get back together. I'm pretty proud of the new and groundbreaking exhibit programming I developed at Vesterheim and I'm excited to start creating programs that can build new audiences for the DPL. I'm also really eager to bring the relationships I forged with local businesses and organizations over to the library to collaborate on programs. The Administrative Coordinator is also the 2nd in



command at the library and serves on the management team and helps set short- and long-term strategic goals to further advance the mission of the library. I'm really excited to bring my experience leading strategic planning sessions to the library and to work with alongside Kristin and the rest of the DPL crew to build the next phase of the public library.



FRIENDS OF THE DECORAH PUBLIC LIBRARY THANKS MONDAY CLUB FOR SUPPORT

By Karla Brown

On Monday, January 4th, Friends of Decorah Public Library President Karla Brown presented Lisa Lien, President of the Decorah Monday Club, with a certificate of appreciation and honorary Friends membership for their longstanding generous support of the Friends Group.

The Monday Club was founded by six Decorah women in 1897 and will soon celebrate their 125th anniversary. The founders were educated women with domestic help, so they met on Mondays initially to read together. The group helped lobby for tax-based support for the library as a city-directed institution and continues to hold an annual fundraiser with proceeds going to the Friends.

The mission of the Friends of the Decorah Public Library is to promote and enhance the Decorah Public Library and its programs for the leisure, entertainment and personal life-long learning of the citizens of Decorah and the greater Winneshiek County area. The Friends help provide funding for the purchase of books, furniture, software, equipment and programming beyond the regular city/county budgets.

LOCAL AUTHOR TO PRESENT AT FRIENDS' ANNUAL MEETING

By Karla Brown

On Monday, April 26th, at 7:00 p.m. the Friends of the Decorah Public Library will hold their annual meeting with featured speaker Dr. Amy Weldon, English Professor at Luther College. In her talk entitled "Weaving the Cloth of Historical Fiction," Weldon will share how as a writer of historical fiction she uses research to build enough "walking-around knowledge" of a time period to have characters walk comfortably and believably around in the novel.

Weldon's first published fiction, *Eldorado, Iowa: A Novel* (Bowen Press Books, 2019), is a coming-of-age story that alternates between post-Civil War Alabama and the frontier town of Eldorado in 1875, where pregnant Sarah Archer and her physician husband are settling into a small Norwegian community. Weldon also has a forthcoming novel, called *Creature*, based on the life of Mary Shelley, in addition to her previous books *The Hands-On Life: How to Wake Yourself Up and Save the World* (Cascade Books, 2018) and *The Writer's Eye: Observation and Inspiration for Creative Writers* (Bloomsbury, 2018). An Alabama native, Weldon holds a B.A. in English and journalism from Auburn University and a Ph.D. in 19th-century British literature from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

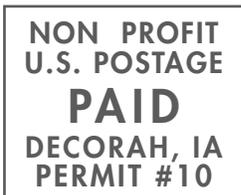
After a brief Friends business meeting, Dr. Weldon will share her inspiration for her novels, talk about her research and writing processes, and take audience questions. Because of Covid-19, the meeting will be held on Zoom. Please watch for further information in the *Driftless Journal*, decorahnews.com, and on the library's webpage to access the Zoom event.

Mark your calendars now!





**Friends of Decorah
Public Library**
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For details about upcoming programs or to see pictures from recent events, like Decorah Public Library on Facebook!

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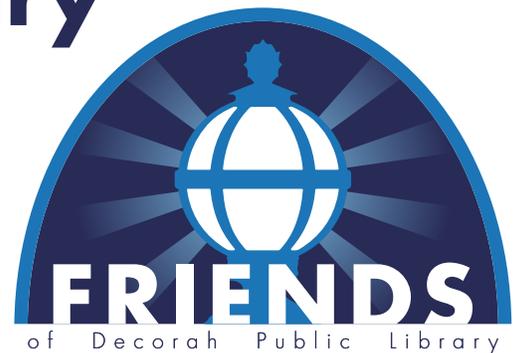
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