

FRIENDS of Decorah Public Library

– Spring 2021 Issue –

DPL & LOCAL SCHOOLS COLLABORATE TO PROMOTE READING

By Marilyn Rue

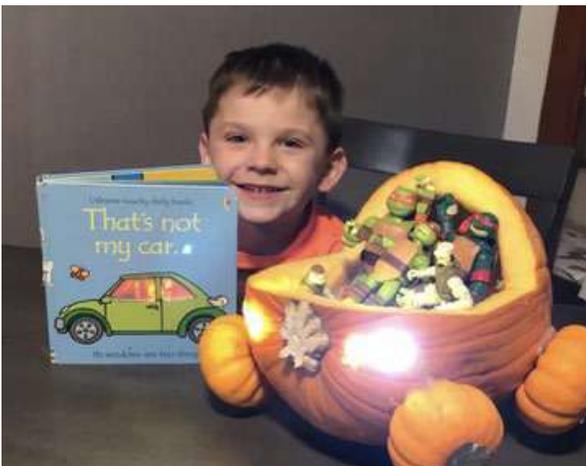
Throughout the past several years, Decorah Public Library and Decorah Community Schools have collaborated on large family events to celebrate literacy and encourage recreational reading. Shanna Putnam Dibble, Elementary Learner Advocate, along with Rachael Button, DPL Children's and Young Adult Librarian, have planned activities using funds from Friends of Decorah Public Library to support their programming. For example, in October 2020, Decorah school families were given pumpkins to decorate with inspiration coming from a favorite book.

March is designated National Reading Month, and in previous years, family literacy events have attracted large numbers of children and parents to West Side and John Cline schools. During this pandemic year, the challenge has been to offer an enjoyable alternative to the large group events. Not to be deterred, Shanna, in collaboration with Rachael, was inspired to create grab-and-go activities that families could do at home, much like the popular Take-and-Make activities that the library offers.

Family Reading Month Adventure Kits were created and assembled by high school volunteers. Around 200 preschool and John Cline students and families participated this year. What preschool child wouldn't want a literacy-themed bag which included popcorn so that they could "Pop into a great book"? Kits also included mini-journals and supplies for making bookmarks and puppets. Resource information for parents guided them in supporting their children by retelling familiar stories, which is a valuable literacy skill, and offering a "Choice Board" with several activities that families could do together.

Adventure Kits for Kindergarten through 2nd-graders were equally engaging and centered on a space theme, "Reading is Out of This World." Each bag included items to make a space alien snack; mini-journals and space stickers to create a book; Play-Doh to fashion elements in the solar system and materials to make straw and plastic cup rockets. Photos and resource materials accompanied these kits.

While many aspects of our lives have been paused this past year, our library, in collaboration with Decorah Community Schools, has continued to creatively fulfill its mission of engaging our community by providing materials and opportunities for lifelong learning. We are indebted to Shanna and Rachael for their amazing work!



MEET YOUR DPL STAFF: **MARK WHELAN**

Tell us something about your background...

I was born in Decorah. A child of the 1980s, I spent most of my time drawing and dreaming. You could say that not much has changed. I graduated from Luther College with a degree in Art in 2002 and immediately relocated to Iowa City with no prospects or employment opportunities. I kicked the pavement for two months before finally landing a temporary position at Iowa Book LLC. The temp work evolved to a permanent hire and I spent the next six years living and working a "normal" retail life. In the spring of 2008, I moved to Lake Havasu City, Arizona, where I worked for my brother at his art gallery and framing studio. The business suffered the economic downturn of that time and after two years I found myself returning home to Decorah.

When did you begin working at DPL?

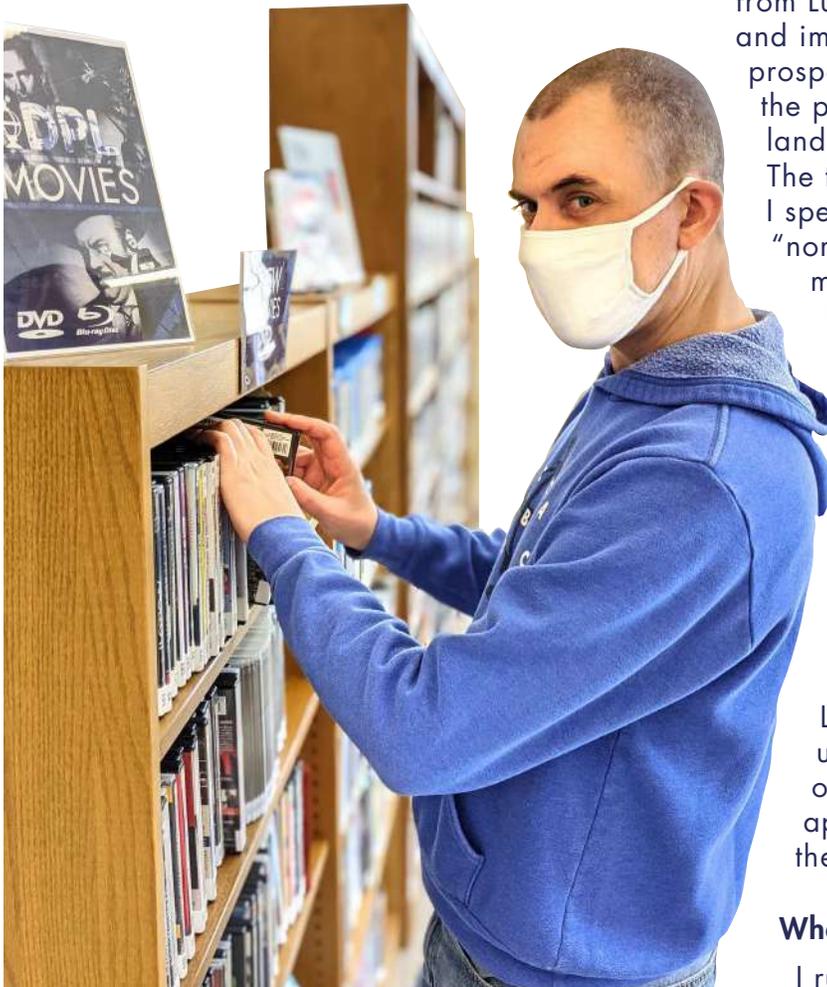
The library's Administrative Coordinator (at the time) Kristin Torresdal invited me to showcase my artwork in the Mezzanine Gallery at the Decorah Public Library in the summer of 2010. Given I was unemployed and idle, I jumped at the opportunity. She later encouraged me to apply, and a month later I was hired by then-Director Lorraine Borowski.

What does your job involve?

I run the entire gamut of library responsibilities. There are the usual shelving and customer service tasks attributed to library employment, but I also do a fair amount of graphic work, film reviews for our website, and acquisitions for our movie library, as well as inputting patron data. Before the pandemic I was the designated "closer," so I had to make sure the library was safe and sound before heading home for the evening. In 2018 I was appointed the library's union representative, which has allowed me a front seat to working with city management.

What do you value about DPL and its place in the community?

Decorah has changed significantly since my days as an adolescent. Probably most in the past ten or fifteen years. The development and growth of this quaint little community is inspiring. The library is a focal point, a beating heart to the body of Decorah. I'm proud to be part of a vital element to this wonderful town.



Multiple-Copy Book Sets

Are you organizing a local book group? Do you know someone who might be looking for their next book club read?

The Friends have provided funding for a large collection of multiple-copy book group sets. These book club sets are available for local book groups to borrow (as well as book groups across the state of Iowa). Contact staff member Carmen at 382-3717 or cbuss@decorah.lib.ia.us to reserve book club sets for your book group. They are incredibly popular so we recommend reserving them well in advance of your desired discussion date.



ANNUAL MEETING FOCUSED ON HISTORICAL FICTION

By Karla Brown

Local author Dr. Amy Weldon's talk "Weaving the Cloth of Historical Fiction" drew 33 attendees for the Friends Board Annual Meeting on Zoom on Monday, April 26th. Weldon said that historical fiction is enjoying great popularity and suggested that reading it can help make a place for the past in our lives. She offered useful advice to writers of historical fiction, including the importance of focusing on the language of the human body and human senses, as well as avoiding a "history class voice" and editorial or judgmental language.

Dr. Weldon read short excerpts from her published book *Eldorado, Iowa: A Novel*, and *Creature*, another completed manuscript based on the life of Mary Shelley, to illustrate how she uses historical research to allow characters to walk comfortably and believably within the time period of her fiction. Participants Harlan Nelson and Mark Ruen excelled at a writing exercise in which Amy engaged attendees. Weldon stressed that successful historical fiction writers can sometimes make the history too obtrusive rather than making the research live and move and remain subordinate to the story. Even those who will never write historical fiction gained insights to enrich their reading of the genre.

FRIENDS WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER: ALAN ELLICKSON

The Friends of Decorah Public Library are pleased to welcome Alan Ellickson to the Friends Board.

Alan has retired from real estate sales and Camcar/Textron. He and his wife live northwest of Decorah. They have four children and three grandchildren. Alan enjoys reading, biking, yoga, cooking, bowling, fine whiskey, and visiting with friends and family.

"The Decorah Public Library is a valuable community resource I use frequently," Alan says. "I look forward to serving on the Friends Board of Directors."

Welcome aboard, Alan!



COVID FUNDING & TECHNOLOGY UPDATES

In October 2020, the Friends gave Decorah Public Library a \$3,000 Covid Innovation Fund. These funds were designated for covid-related program or service expenses. Library staff were able to purchase the following: Splashtop remote tech assistance software; a digital video camera, webcam, USB microphone, video light/stand kit, and video camera tripod for digital programming; 2 SD cards and an external hard drive for video editing; and a wide format printer for printing specialized publicity materials.

Library Director Kristin Torresdal said, "The Friends have been extremely supportive of our programming efforts over the years and once again provided assistance during the pandemic that allowed us to accomplish goals that went above and beyond the provisions of our general operating budget. Staff will be able to make consistent use of the new tech equipment as we move out of the pandemic as well- and we have some fun projects in the works!"





**Friends of Decorah
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decorahfriends@gmail.com

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

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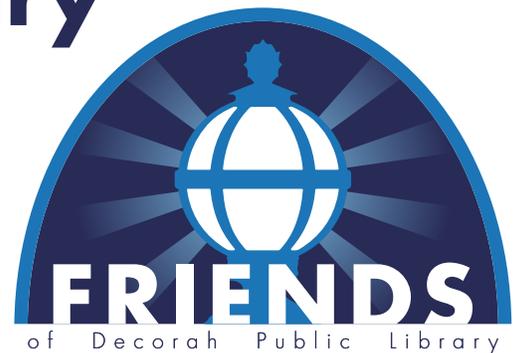
FRIENDS of the Library Membership Form

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