

Check It Out!

Summer Reading Benefits All Ages

The kids are still all right

by Lynn Nowak

FOR KIDS AS WELL AS ADULTS, it's been a wild ride: fifteen topsy-turvy months of worrying about the COVID-19 virus; managing online work or school; and missing family, friends, and what normal life looked and felt like.

So this summer, what can parents and families do to engage and stimulate children's brains, boost their learning, and have some well-deserved fun? The Port Townsend Public Library's Summer Reading Program ticks all the boxes!

Much may seem to be at stake after months of living the pandemic lifestyle. Understandably, concerns have arisen about whether students will fall behind or suffer gaps in their education after such challenging 2019–20 and 2020–21 school years. Yet when it comes to what's next for youth, local librarians have a decidedly upbeat view.

"Kids are resilient," said Hilary Verheggen, manager of youth services at the Port Townsend Public Library. "They will bounce back—and the library will be here with books, events, and other resources to support children and families as they work through it all."

"We have shown how much kids and families can adapt. I am so impressed with the ways our children have continued to be active members of their learning environment, despite all the challenges," she said. Much like adults, Verheggen said,

kids have had to learn how to use online platforms and tools, and how to continue to be engaged—even when distractions tug at their focus.

"Libraries' role in promoting a lifelong love of reading is more important than ever before," said Melody Sky Eisler, library director. "Not only does reading or being read to help kids avoid the 'summer slide,' reading for pleasure provides joy, comfort, and stress relief—and our whole world needs that right now."

Verheggen said the ultimate goal of the Summer Reading Program is to offer fun activities within the library and outside its four walls. As always, she hopes that kids will continue their informal education throughout the summer. While some methods of delivering programs have changed (most are still online via Zoom), the library's charge remains the same this year as in any other.

Scott Bahlmann, youth and teen services librarian at the Jefferson County Library, is also optimistic. "I think we've all had an adjustment to our framework for gratitude." For him, a personal positive about the past year is the appreciation of things once taken for granted. He views stories as a guiding light.

"I'm not worried about our kids; this year has affected everyone. But we've all had an opportunity to slow down a bit

(continued on next page)



© Richard Jesse Watson

Sign up for Summer Reading & color *your* world!

To register for the Summer Reading Program and find full schedules and information, call or visit the libraries, in person or online.

Port Townsend Public Library

ptpubliclibrary.org/library/page/cleo-summer-reading

360-385-3181

Jefferson County Library

jclibrary.info/youth/srp/

360-385-6544

North Olympic Library System

nols.org

360-417-8500 (Port Angeles main branch)

experts in nature's color connections, Pacific Northwest mammals, glass blowing, and cartooning—to highlight just a few of the presentations lined up.

Verheggen is also enthusiastic about weekly take-and-

make craft bags for preschoolers, elementary-age students, and teens. Kids can take home and create everything from picture frames to birds' nests, from monster magnets to pollinator planters. Bahlmann, too, highlights the craft kits. He enjoyed preparing them, underscoring the value of hands-on learning.

Verheggen said the city and county library teams decided on "Reading Colors Your World" as an appropriate theme to highlight equity, diversity, and inclusion. They made a point to include Summer Reading programs that celebrate artists of color. Also, a new display at the library celebrates works by and about people of color, LGBTQIA+ folks, and neurodiverse individuals (those with brain variations such as ADHD and autism).

"We want everyone to see themselves reflected in our collections and programs," Eisler said. "Library cards are truly passports to a bigger world of stories and possibilities. I would encourage patrons of all ages to read more fiction this summer by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color), LGBTQIA+, and neurodiverse authors." One of the best ways to develop empathy and understand others' experiences is through stories, Bahlmann concurred.

In the libraries of the North Olympic Library System (in Port Angeles, Forks, Clallam Bay, and Sequim), staff have interpreted the "Reading Colors Your World" theme as an opportunity to highlight and explore the world locals

see every day, plus their role in it. "Part of our challenge focuses on community responsibility and the individual's ability to affect community," said Knight.

Online programs

The online Zoom platform brings engaging performers, programs, and enrichment activities to the Olympic Peninsula that most people wouldn't have access to otherwise, Knight said. For the reluctant virtual participant, Verheggen offers some reassurance: "Zoom programs can be really interactive. For example, illustrator Dana Sullivan leads a drawing workshop by allowing kids to pick what he draws and showing them how to make a great doodle." Bahlmann suggested getting a group of friends together to join a Zoom activity: the platform allows for real-time discussion with professionals and peers, and the shared experience can make it more fun.

For kids and adults who don't use online tools, Eisler has announced that the Port Townsend Public Library plans to offer outdoor Storytimes on the Library Learning Center (Pink House) lawn as a COVID-safe, in-person activity for children and families. Also, staff is working on a permanent StoryWalk to be installed at Kah Tai Lagoon later this summer or in the fall. Three StoryWalks, and possibly a fourth, will be offered in the county, Bahlmann said. In addition, outdoor storytimes are planned at H. J. Carroll Park, Quilcene School, and the Brinnon Community Center. "Finally, one of the most joyful activities we offer now is for kids and families to come inside the library and browse together again," Eisler said.

Bahlmann emphasized that "the best way to build strong readers is to let them see you reading or read with them." Librarians at NOLS have worked to embrace an "explore your world" element into this year's Summer Reading Program. "Anything families can do to expose their kids to experiences will help kids build their vocabularies," said Knight. "There are a lot of passive literacy opportunities every day—observing at the grocery store, reading

and recognize important opportunities to support social and mental health as a community. This has included using stories for escapism, or to better understand the larger nationwide and worldwide concerns about health and equality.

"There is always a place and time for stories," he said.

"Reading Colors Your World"

The Port Townsend Public Library (PTPL) and Jefferson County Library (JCL) are partnering in the Summer Reading Program. Joining them this year is the North Olympic Library System (NOLS), which has branches throughout Clallam County. Verheggen praised the teams from JCL and NOLS, led by Bahlmann and Jennifer Knight, respectively, describing them as creative, responsive, and excellent sounding boards for ideas throughout the pandemic. NOLS youth services librarian Knight noted that collaborating with the other two libraries is mutually beneficial and ultimately means better programming.

Summer Reading officially kicks off on June 18, when readers of all ages can begin logging their reading hours, either via an online format or by downloading and using a paper tracker. (See sidebar above for links to full schedule and how to earn a T-shirt!) Then a variety of planned Zoom events, open to participants from all three library systems, will take place every Tuesday morning, starting June 22. These include

signs, playing board games.” All of these actions assist kids in their development.

Fostering and sustaining young people’s growth and learning can extend beyond their families and into the community, too. Supporting the Friends of the Port Townsend Library (and the other libraries’ Friends groups) with donations is welcomed and appreciated, Eisler said, since the Friends funds the Summer Reading Program. Knight suggested that community members can also help by supporting school legislation and literacy initiatives, such as the Dolly Parton Imagination Library (recently launched in Jefferson County through Rotary). Once COVID restrictions lessen, community members might consider tutoring, she added.

“I wholeheartedly agree that ‘it takes a village’ to encourage a lifelong love of reading in children,” Eisler said. “One of the best things that adults can do is to sign up for Summer Reading and model reading for pleasure. When kids are read to by caring adults, they associate reading with love. That makes my librarian heart swoon.” 📖

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For More Family Fun

Make a tiny pixie house

The notion of home has always been important, but in 2020–21, “home” took on outsized importance. Even as we re-emerge, brighten the indoors with these simple pixie houses, and keep smiling all summer long.

You will need

White paper cups, any size. (We used 8-oz., but taller or shorter would be great too.

Make some in different heights!)

Assorted Sharpies or markers in lots of colors

Colored construction paper

Yogurt or other food-container lid, a little larger than the top of your cups

Glue

Scissors



Craft and photos by Lynn Nowak

Directions

1. Draw house features on white paper cups with markers in bold colors. Color a door red—or blue or purple or yellow. Any color is the right color! Draw some windows and color them, too, outlining the door and windows with black marker so they stand out. Add some finishing touches, such as flowers or grass, ivy around the door, or a window box. How about a face peeking out the window?
2. To make the roof, use the lid to trace a circle on colored construction paper. (You might have to experiment to get the size right.) When you’re satisfied, cut out the circle with scissors. Then, make one cut from the edge of the circle to the center. Pull one cut edge over the other to shape a shallow cone. Glue down the edges. With a black marker, draw on some shingles if you like.
3. Run a line of glue around the cup’s top circumference, and gently place the roof cone on top of the pixie house to secure it.
4. The house is done, but you can embellish it with moss, twigs, shells, glitter, buttons, or other ephemera.
5. Make some more houses and create a pixie village!



What Friends Are Reading

◆ *The Bookseller of Florence*

Ross King (2021)

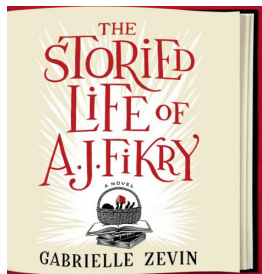
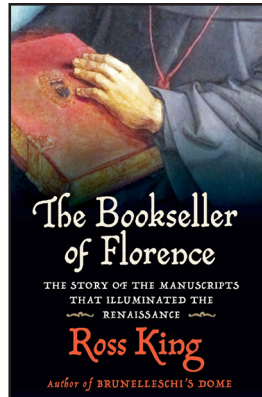
Since I spent nearly forty years working in bookstores, it was a given that I would want to read Ross King's *The Bookseller of Florence*. But regardless of whether you have any experience behind a bookshop's counter, this is a great read—entertaining and enlightening in equal measure. King returns to the city and history he portrayed in *Brunelleschi's Dome*, concentrating this time on the fascinating figure of Vespasiano da Bisticci, a man called by his friends “the king of the world's booksellers.”

Vespasiano was born near Florence in 1422, into the period we now call the Renaissance, a time marked by a great intellectual flowering and unprecedented thirst for classical knowledge. His shop on the Via dei Librai was a gathering place not only for the intellectual stars of Florence but for visitors from abroad, who sought out the bookseller's ability to get the rarest manuscripts, the finest translations, and the most beautiful volumes. He and his agents were always on the lookout for previously unknown work—sometimes mere fragments—by Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, and other classical giants, resurrecting them from moldy monastic libraries or salvaged during the fall of Constantinople.

His bookshop flourished as he catered to clergy, scholars, and kings, withstanding economic downturns, shifting political winds, and even the fall of a pope or two—until his business model was threatened by the advance of a new technology (which seems to crop up in the book business every 500 years or so). Moveable type meant books no longer had to be carefully copied by talented scribes, and books could now be produced quickly and cheaply, which widened readership but presented stiff competition to Vespasiano's hand-crafted volumes.

This window into a fifteenth-century business is both fascinating and familiar, and Ross King is a master at this intimate history. He makes people we can never otherwise meet come alive, and he tells a big story through the relatable details of an everyday life. I felt so at home in his bookshop I thought I should apply for a job—although, owing to my lack of either Latin or Greek, I would have been qualified for only a very junior position. But bookseller or not, anyone who likes to be transported by history will love this book as much as I did.

—Kristine Kaufman



◆ *The Storied Life of A. J. Fikry*

Gabrielle Zevin (2014)

Set on a small island off the coast of New England, this tale about a bookseller, and the wild occurrences in his store, was outstanding. A. J. F., as he likes to sign his notes and comments to his family, is unashamedly irascible: no wonder his bookstore is barely able to keep its doors open. Since his wife died, 18 months ago, A. J. has fallen into a deep, dark hole and seems unable to pull himself out. Then one night he gets so drunk that a valuable book—one he was saving to fund his retirement—is stolen right from under his nose. Thus begins the cascade of events that changes our protagonist and everyone else he knows.

Spanning approximately ten years and populated with interesting but flawed characters—folks I would like to know—the narration adopts the viewpoints of all the major players. Yet Zevin is able to keep a tight rein on every character, achieving a story with a punch—several in fact. She also uses some unusual techniques, including stories within the story and chapter titles that are titles of books by other authors, which she ties in nicely to each turn of the plot. This is a book for booklovers.

From laugh-out-loud funny to heartbreakingly sad, this tale captivated me. I found myself wondering, even when I wasn't listening to it, what the next plot turn would be—which is what any good book is supposed to do. And this one does it well. It's an easy and delightful book, no matter what the medium. Obviously, I recommend it!

—Fran Post



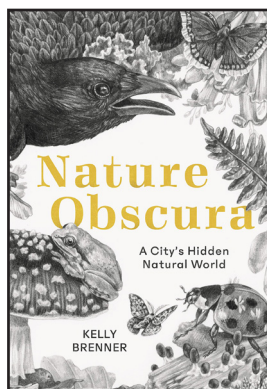
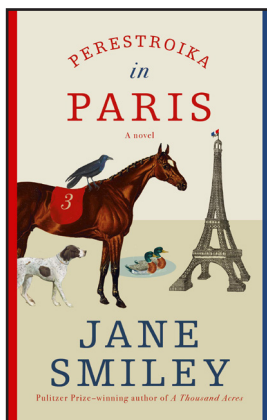
◆ *Perestroika in Paris*

Jane Smiley (2020)

This novel is a lighthearted gambol through the parks, streets, and gardens of Paris—plus one house. *Perestroika* is a thoroughbred filly who is used to winning races and being pampered. One day, her stall door is left unlocked, the stable door left open. The filly's curiosity and sense of adventure get the best of her, and she wanders from a race track near Paris to the Champs de Mars, where she meets Frida, a dog smart in the ways of the city. Together they spend the winter exploring Paris. They connect with several other animals—including two ducks, a raven, and two rats—and an eight-year-old boy being raised by his very elderly grandmother, and they share many experiences and adventures. The animals can all talk to one another and understand the boy, but he cannot understand them. The clever way they interact with the few people they meet entertained me through the entire book.

There is much overcoming of prejudice and stereotyping, all done with a sense of humor and delight in discovery. How the animals get food and shelter is enjoyable. In my opinion, here's the perfect escapist read during our pandemic times.

—Geralynn Rackowski



◆ *Nature Obscura*

Kelly Brenner (2020)

Have you ever wondered about tardigrade survival? The flying formation of crows? How long it takes for the moon snail to lay her egg collars? Or the reverse evolution of the three-spined stickleback? *Nature Obscura: A City's Hidden Natural World* will answer all these questions and many more. Although the book talks about Seattle's hidden natural world, here on the Olympic Peninsula we have the same mosses, lichens, dragonflies, ferns, slime molds, and so on—just more of them. So *Nature Obscura* is not a book exclusively for Seattleites or even Washingtonians. It's a book about looking closely at nature, wondering about it, and diving deep into its exploration.

Brenner followed up in ways I wish I could, by visiting and interviewing experts on each species, so her book reveals current research. For example, when craving more information about a specific fly, she consulted a dipterist and curator of the fly collection at the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria, which includes over 75,000 specimens. I took pages of notes while reading this book, as I was amazed by so many of Brenner's facts: the sword ferns in Seward Park are as old as the trees that shade them, maybe over 500 years old; dragonflies' 30,000 simple eyes make up their compound eyes, and they have 360-degree vision; before 1960, beautiful Lake Washington was a cesspool; the nest of Anna's hummingbird has the same thermal conductivity as polar bear fur! I love how this book was organized into seasons, illustrated by gorgeous black-and-white illustrations for each, and how beautifully written it is. A treasure.

—Wendy Feltham



News We Hope You'll Use

Join Our Board

THE FRIENDS IS LOOKING for new board members. Whether you are a longtime Friend or a newbie—or maybe you've just picked up our newsletter for the first time—you might be just the person we are looking for. Are you wanting to serve and connect with your community? Consider becoming a member of our board.

We are a fun, committed team, in need of other enthusiastic Friends who want to contribute their time, ideas, and skills to promote the Port Townsend Public Library. We especially need people interested in publicity, fundraising, organizing events, or coordinating volunteers and who are also flexible and willing to learn something new. We meet once a month, take part in committees, volunteer at book sales, and even write the occasional book review for this newsletter.

Find out more about us on our website, friendsofptlibrary.org. Or e-mail us (please include your phone number) at friendsofptlibrary@gmail.com.

You'll be glad you did!

You're Invited

EACH YEAR the Friends hosts an annual meeting open to all our supporters. Last year, with the pandemic in full swing, we couldn't greet you in person, so we met via Zoom.

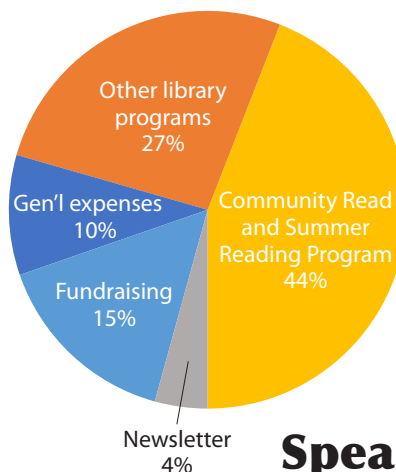
But this year, we are excited to report, we are holding our annual meeting in person again! It will take place on **July 14 at 5:30 PM**, place to be announced. Library Director Melody Sky Eisler will give us the latest news on the now-opened Port Townsend Public Library, and best of all, you could discover a whole new hobby: illustrator and graphic novelist Dana Sullivan will lead an interactive drawing session with us.

To ensure COVID safety, space is limited, so please **RSVP early** by e-mailing us at friendsofptlibrary@gmail.com, and we will send you full details.

You never know: You may enjoy yourself enough to become a board member! We look forward to seeing you.

Follow the Money

WE ARE GRATEFUL for the incredible support the Friends received throughout 2020. In this atypical year, your donations sustained us, making up 73% of our income. Seven pop-up book sales at 2020 Farmers Markets helped shore up total book sales revenue, which made up the other 27%. Because the library was unable to host a full complement of programs—and we printed only two of our three yearly newsletters—we spent less than usual, in proportions shown at left.



Speaking of Which . . .

EVER SINCE JUNE 2019, we promised to ask you no more than two times a year to renew your support of the Friends, and now is one of those times. Can you help?

In 2020 you offered us overwhelming support, which helped sustain not only the Friends but many of the library's activities. Your donations helped the library adapt to new ways of serving patrons, including to transfer well-loved in-person programs online and to create new programs, such as take-and-make crafts. And now your donations are funding this year's Summer Reading Program and a gradual return to live, in-person events.

Help us keep up your good work with a donation. We can't thank you enough!

And in Other News

READY FOR **BOOK SALES**? We have five pop-up sales lined up at the Saturday Farmers Market—June 12, July 3, August 7 and 28, and September 11. And we might have a full-scale sale in the Community Center on October 16!

DURING JULY AND AUGUST, the Food Co-op's Beans for Bags program will include a jar for the Friends of the Port Townsend Library. So keep bringing your own bags, and please drop some beans into our jar. Thanks, Co-op and shoppers.

Time to Renew Our Summer Friendships

Name _____

☐ New Friend ☐ Already a Friend

Address _____

Donation amount

☐ \$10 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50

☐ \$100 ☐ \$200 ☐ \$ _____

Phone _____

☐ \$100 Business *Business sponsors receive a business-card-sized ad in our newsletters for one year*

E-mail _____

Friends of the Port Townsend Library is qualified for tax exemption under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

A donation to the Friends will bring you newsletters, early entry to book sales, and other annual benefits for **one year from the date of your gift**. No more due dates! No more renewal reminders! Instead, twice a year we will ask for your support and be grateful for whatever you can give. Donations may be made at the library or by credit card at the **Friends' website**, friendsofptlibrary.org. Or you may mail this form with your check, payable to Friends of the Port Townsend Library (FOPTL), to

Friends of the Port Townsend Library
P. O. Box 452, Port Townsend, WA 98368

Newsletters are available online, at the library and Food Co-op, and elsewhere

☐ Check here if you want **paper copies mailed** to you

Would you like to volunteer?

Please indicate your area(s) of interest

- ☐ Book sales
- ☐ Help with book donations
- ☐ Publicity and outreach
- ☐ Occasional jobs
- ☐ I have an idea; call me!

New Friends

We thank you who have joined us since March!

H. Amik
Cris Wilson

Partners

Keep our business and nonprofit partners strong!

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Olympic Music Festival, olympicmusicfestival.org

Ranie Keithahn, ranie@olympus.net

Sound Storage, www.sound-storage.com

Terrapin Architecture, Richard Berg,

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PLACE
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HERE

Upcoming Farmers Market
Pop-Up Book Sales
*June 12, July 3,
August 7 & 28
September 11*



Who We Are

THE PORT TOWNSEND PUBLIC LIBRARY was founded in 1898 by volunteers and, thanks to continuing community support, has remained an active Carnegie Library since its present doors opened in 1913.

The Friends of the Port Townsend Library, established in 1978, supports programs, services, and materials beyond what the city's library budget covers. Every year we fund reading programs, events, and activities for all ages; we also hold three book sales and publish three newsletters. Newsletters are available in the library, around town, and at friendsofptlibrary.org.

Our funding comes primarily from supporters, donations, and book sales. We invite anyone to become a Friend and attend our board meetings, which take place on the second Wednesday of each month, 3:30 PM, via Zoom. Please contact us by e-mail at friendsofptlibrary@gmail.com to receive an active link or meeting location update.

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