

BOOK FRIENDLY

JANUARY 2022



Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library
FRIENDS
www.friendsofcphlibrary.org



Happy New Year, Friends! We are beginning a new format for Book Friendly! Our continuing COVID record tells our ongoing story of creativity and resilience. Enjoy!

TWO TOWNS-ONE BOOK 2022 PROGRAM ANNOUNCED

JO ANNE ROBBINS

The Two Towns – One Book Steering Committee is excited to announce the 2022 program for our Book of the Year, *Finding Dorothy*, by Elizabeth Letts. As you know, this book was a finalist last time and ranked third in votes cast following *Becoming* and *Educated*. After skipping a year of activities due to COVID, programming begins again in January 2022.

Because of the uptick in our COVID numbers following the Thanksgiving holiday, much of our programming will initially be on ZOOM. If the virus infection rate improves and library protocol allows, this may change.

Any changes will be communicated on our website.

www.twotownsonebook.org.

We will also communicate using frequent emails and programming messages on our new displays at the Library.

We still hope to engage the author Elizabeth Letts, for one of the programs, if the COVID numbers allow.

Our Kick Off is scheduled for Sunday, January 9 at 2:00pm, in the Library Program Rooms.

Join us for the iconic movie, *The Wizard of Oz* and enjoy a display of *The Wizard of Oz* costumes provided by the Halfmoon Historical Society. The Library is creating a Scavenger Hunt and prizes will be awarded. Make your reservations on the Library calendar. **Reservations are required** for all programming and masks must be worn. Families may sit together, but otherwise social distancing is encouraged. To reserve your seat(s), visit the Library website.

Tuesday, February 8 at 7:00pm, on ZOOM, Wizard of Oz Trivia Night led by Asst. Directors, Jim Foster and LouAnn Stuart.

Join family and friends for a fun evening of wonderful wizard trivia. Prizes will be awarded.

Reservations are required.

March – Make and Take Wizardly Craft Projects

Weekly during the month of March, children's and adult make and take projects will be available each Monday - children's projects in the

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*May Your Holidays
Be Merry, Bright!
Friendly & Peaceful*

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Children's Library and adult projects at the Ask a Librarian Desk, one per person while the supply lasts.

Author Elizabeth Letts Coming on Zoom – Date TBA

She'll also be coming in person next October!

Saturday, April 23, 2:00pm, Finding Dorothy Book Discussion on ZOOM.

Join Librarian Linda Fox for a lively book discussion on ZOOM. **Reservations are required.** Your ZOOM invitation will be emailed and a reminder will be sent. Questions to be discussed will be provided in advance and participants may submit questions prior to the event.

Saturday, May 7th, a Bus Trip to Chittenango, NY led by FOL Travel Coordinator, Rhona Koretzky Forman. The bus leaves CPH Library at 8:00am.

L. Frank Baum was born in Chittenango and raised in the vicinity. His estate operates the All Things Oz Museum. We will have a private tour lasting about an hour with some time to browse the collection on our own, and visit the gift shop.

Next we will visit the Matilda Joslyn Gage Center, about 9 miles away. Gage was a suffragette and the mother of Maud, who married Frank Baum. She is credited with encouraging Frank to write his stories.

Finally, we will stop at the Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum. This was a dry dock station for boat repairs on the Erie Canal. Frank's father Benjamin Baum, had a barrel factory and barrels were shipped along the canal from this location.

So all three locations have a connection with the themes of our book and will give us an additional view into the back-story.

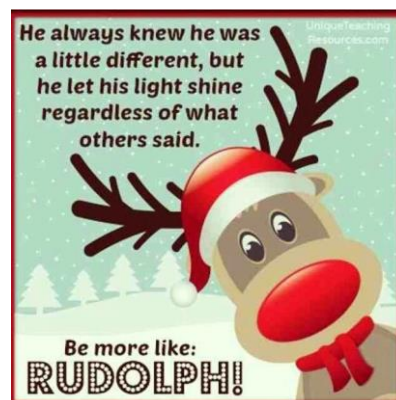
Registration and proof of COVID vaccination are required. Masks will be required at all times except when having lunch. Lunch plans TBA. Registration opens in February. The price of the trip is \$75.00 for FOL members - \$80.00 for non-members. To register, mail your check payable to Friends of the Library (with May 7th Bus Trip on the memo line) to



Clifton Park-Halfmoon Library, 475 Moe Road, Clifton Park, NY 12065, Attention FOL.

Kids Read Too! 2021-2022

The Junior Companion Book for this year's Community Read, *Finding Dorothy* by Elizabeth Letts, is *Malala's Magic Pencil* by Malala Yousafzai for grades pre/k-2; *Malala: My Story of Standing up for Girls' Rights* by Malala Yousafzai for grades 3-5; and *I am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai for grades 6-8. These books are about Malala's childhood in Pakistan, where she was taught (by her supportive parents) to stand up for what she believes, and describes her story of bravery, determination and finding her inner strengths and talents. These titles are available at our library.



SOME COVID HAIKUS

Mind full, not mindful
Racing through COVID clutter
Focus, breathe, connect.

Did you notice clouds?
Did you hear the birds singing?
Quiet is a gift.



ELL Class in 2009, Piracci Board Room

LIBRARY FACES NEW CHALLENGES WITH CREATIVITY

ALEX GUTELIUS, DIRECTOR

As COVID continues to create challenges and obstacles, our staff continues to find new and creative ways to serve the public. Our plan was to kick-off the New Year with a return to in-person programming. Unfortunately, due to the steady rise in cases in our area, those plans will be delayed once again. We are currently offering small group programs in person and have recently introduced a new “hybrid” option for several of our programs, allowing patrons to attend programs in person or on Zoom, depending on their comfort level.

Our grab and go crafts have become very popular amongst all age groups! We foresee continuing this grab and go option well into future programming. In the New Year, we are planning several fun and interactive displays throughout the Library: a student art show; a Wizard of Oz display; and a fun photo spot that our library staff are busy creating. We encourage you to come in, take a look, and take lots of pictures!

Additionally, we are happy to announce that the Library will resume its English Language Learning classes in January. Classes will include beginner, intermediate, and conversational levels, and are free and open to all levels of non-English speakers. At this time, we anticipate these classes taking place via Zoom. Anyone interested in signing up for one of these classes can fill out a form on our website. **Sign Up Today!**

WELCOME ALISON WITMER, NEW LIBRARY ELL COORDINATOR

Hello, Friends! I am thrilled to come on board here at the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Library as the Coordinator for the English Language Learning, or ELL, program. This program, comprised of classes as well as 1:1 tutoring, was a staple of our adult programming thanks to a strong and dedicated volunteer base.

Unfortunately, the pandemic's arrival shut down nearly all of our in-person classes, although the Intermediate level class pressed on using Zoom technology, and they continue to meet today! My primary goal is to re-launch this program, and help return it to the robust state it was pre-pandemic. I plan to listen to all stakeholders in hopes of refining the program for its return. Additionally, I envision strengthening our visibility to ensure the ELL program is reaching all possible pockets of our community.



I have a B.A. in Psychology from Colgate University and an M.S. in Education from Wheelock College. For many years, I worked as a teacher and curriculum coordinator in the greater Boston area. I have also had the pleasure of teaching English as a Second Language on a 1:1 basis with Chinese students. More recently, I have served on the board of Clifton Park Nursery School or the “Little Red Schoolhouse” as Registrar.

A fun fact about me – I am a product of our wonderful community! I grew up in the Crescent Estates South neighborhood, attended Shenendehowa schools, and graduated in 2001. In 2017, my husband and I returned “home” when our son was an infant. I am now re-experiencing Clifton Park as a parent, and it is a joy. We have been particularly grateful for all the Library offers its youngest patrons, especially through the pandemic.

Please reach out to me with questions, ideas, or concerns. You can reach me directly at awitmer@sals.edu.



MUSEUM PASSES PROVIDE FUN DURING THE HOLIDAYS

JO ANNE ROBBINS

Do you like going to museums? The Library offers 17 great choices and your membership in the Friends of the Library funds them!

We do this to provide children & adults opportunities to experience history, culture and the arts through a visit to a museum. The savings to residents borrowing a Museum Pass are substantial! For example, a visit to Mass MoCA for a family of four (two adults and two children) costs over \$50.00. CPH Library patrons can check out passes for three days FREE !

Here's the list of passes currently available at the Ask A Librarian Desk:

Albany Institute of History and Art: Albany, NY, Admits 2 adults and 2 children under 18

Berkshire Museum: Pittsfield, MA, Admits 2 adults and 2 children under 18. Children under 3 are FREE.

The Childrens Museum at Saratoga: Admits up to 4 visitors. Two passes are available

The Children's Museum of Science and Technology: Troy, NY. Admits 2 adults and all the children in the family. Two passes are available.

Empire State Aerosciences Museum: Schenectady, NY. Admits up to 4 visitors. One member must be at least 18 years old.

Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art: Amherst, MA. Admits 2 adults and up to 4 children per visit.

Firemen's Association of the State of New York, Museum of Firefighting: Hudson, NY. Admits 2 adults and 2 children ages 5-17. Children 4 and under are FREE.

The Hancock-Shaker Village Museum: Hancock, MA. Admits 2 adults and 2 youth (13-17). Children 12 and under are FREE.

Hildene - The Lincoln Family Home: Manchester, VT. Admits one adult and up to two children age 16 and under. All children 5 and under are free.

The Hyde Collection: Glens Falls, NY. Each pass admits 2 adults and all children under 18. Two passes are available.

MASS MoCA: North Adams, MA. Admits 2 adults and 2 children.

The National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame: Saratoga Springs, NY. Admits up to 4 visitors, as well as a 50% discount on the Backstretch Tours and a 15% discount in the museum gift shop

Schenectady County Historical Society(includes Mabee Farm): Schenectady, NY. Admits up to 4 Visitors. Two Passes are available



Schenectady Museum and Suits-Bueche Planetarium - Museum of Science and Innovation: Schenectady, NY. Admits 2 adults and all children in family.

U.S.S. Slater: Albany, NY. Admits 2 adults and 2 children.

Wild Center: Tupper Lake, NY. Admits 2 adults and all children in the family under 17.

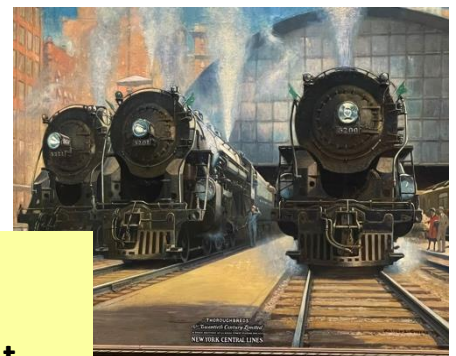
The World Awareness Children's Museum: Glens Falls, NY. Admits 4 visitors.

Please remember that not all museums have re-opened, and things change on a daily basis. [Click here](#) to view the status of our museum passes. We will update the document as we receive new information. Please be aware that museum hours and activities may be limited by pandemic regulations, masks and social distancing are required, and some museums may require visit reservations to control numbers on site, *so calling ahead is advised.* Just like library books, the physical passes are placed in quarantine once returned as a precaution against COVID-19. As always, passes are available on a first come, first served basis.



THE ALBANY INSTITUTE – OF HISTORY AND ART A GEM OF A MUSEUM JO ANNE ROBBINS

Just before Thanksgiving, I traveled to Albany with a group of friends to visit the Albany Institute of History and Art, an excellent museum and used one of our Museum Passes – a gem. It was a perfect day to enjoy the exhibits on display, with decorated holiday trees to lighten our spirits, and an excellent opportunity to do a little shopping too. They have an interesting gift shop. That pass allows two adults and two children under 18 to visit. It's a great place to spend the day!



**The Albany
Institute of
History and Art**



Check out their calendar of events.

[View AIHA Calendar](#)

USED BOOK SALE EVENT AMAZING! LANNA LANGLOIS

After an eighteen-month hiatus thanks to COVID, we scheduled our Used Book Sale for mid-October and crossed our fingers. After re-opening donations at the beginning of July, our volunteers scrambled to keep up with the avalanche that came our way. Obviously COVID lockdown saw lots of book buying and reading, as well as shelf cleaning. Since we had so much inventory, we decided to expand the book sale to four days, starting Thursday morning and running through Sunday afternoon.

We were a little anxious about finding enough volunteers for four days, but between our regulars (who were really excited to be back in action), teens (and even a few pre-teens) from Shenendehowa's National Honor Society and other organizations, and folks who responded to Facebook and NextDoor posts, we were well covered.

Set up was really something! In order to display as many materials as possible and provide better distancing, we needed more room and tables than ever before. In terms of both room and tables, the Library came through for us. They bought eight additional tables, both for the sale and to be used throughout the library post-sale. Still, we needed more tables and were able to borrow from volunteers and the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. Thank you again!

To solve the space issue, the Library allowed us to use more of the open areas on the second floor. Counters and cashiers were moved out of the main room and into the hallway next to the Children's Library. CDs and DVDs were on tables further back in the same hallway. The end of the gallery hallway was used to store empty boxes and chair racks, freeing up all four program rooms for tables of books.

Both because of the amount of material and the changes to the layout, set-up on Wednesday took almost twice as long as usual. By the end, our volunteers were sweating and exhausted, but they got it all done. Now we were ready to open on Thursday, not knowing quite what to expect.

What arrived was a community that was very happy to see the sale return; a couple of people told us, "If it were not for COVID, I'd hug you!" Sales were steady and

volunteers replenished shelves with those books that we couldn't quite fit onto the shelves in the initial set-up.

On Sunday, we had our usual "Bag of Books for \$1" sale, with a twist. Since we still had a lot of inventory left, we made it "BOGO" – buy a bag for \$1, get another bag free. Several people added a donation to their purchase, including one man who got one bag and gave us a twenty, saying, "Keep the change, and keep doing the sale." And we will!

Based on feedback, we've decided to continue with four-day sales and to stay with the new larger space layout. We also decided not to accept donations of CDs or DVDs, as the demand did not keep up with our supply. We will sell what we had leftover at the next sale, but we won't be taking in any more of those items.

All in all, the sale was a resounding success. Our wonderful volunteers and community were happy to be back and there were lots of smiles, both for treasures found and a tradition continued. That said, we hope to see you at our next sale on February 10th – 13th.



Two adorable little tots enjoyed picking out their own books! Our children love the book sale!



HEY FRIENDS!

KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS NOT YET AN FOL MEMBER?

Did you know that the money raised through fund raisers and FOL membership donations support the Library through the purchase of materials, and by sponsoring activities, programs and opportunities that the Library could not otherwise offer?

The Friends are very active and the funds we raise benefit the Library and our community. We couldn't do it without your continued membership and support. Thank you!

So, how about asking some of your friends to become Friends of the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Library?

Print this page and give/send it to a friend before January 31. If your friend joins us, you will receive a \$5 coupon in time for the Winter Used Book Sale (February 10 thru February 13, 2022). Membership forms are available online (see links below).

When you join our network of friends and get involved in our activities and projects, you are contributing to our Library community. Plus, you also benefit at every membership level!

Print a Membership Form

Download a Fillable Membership Form**

Print this page and give it to a friend!

Current Member's Name

Current Member's Email Address

RMDS AND CHARITABLE DONATIONS

In 2022, if you are considering donating to a qualified charitable organization such as the Friends of the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library and need to take a Required Minimum Distribution from a qualified retirement plan, it may be advantageous from an income tax perspective to make your charitable donation directly from your retirement account. Your financial advisor or retirement plan administrator can discuss the tax advantage related to using funds from your RMD to make your charitable donation as well as the process to follow to receive the tax-saving benefit from your donation.

HOW DOES YOUR FOL MEMBERSHIP BENEFIT YOU & YOUR LIBRARY?

Your membership in the Friends of the Library benefits our Library and our Library Community!! During our long haul through COVID, our membership numbers declined, but thankfully, our continuing membership support helped to fund the following library programs and services. Becoming a member is important to our continuation of this support. Please consider becoming a member, renewing your membership or giving a tax-deductible gift to the Friends. You can make a donation on our website. [Click here to Donate.](https://www.friendsofcphlibrary.org)

- Purchase of three LED monitor screens
- Cloud Library
- Books for Babies Program
- ELL program support, including additions to the adult language learning collection and the children's foreign language books.
- Nature Story Walk collaboration with the Town of Clifton Park
- News for You Online
- Adult Literacy Books
- World Language Books
- Electronic Foreign Language Magazines
- Museum Passes
- Green Baskets
- Shopping Carts
- Garden Fountain
- Shade Garden Plantings
- Community Scholarships



A NEW WAY TO PROMOTE LIBRARY PROGRAMMING ALEX GUTELIUS, LIBRARY DIRECTOR

If you've been in the Library in recent months, you may have noticed three new large screens mounted throughout the building. About three years ago, we changed to new event scheduling software. This is what patrons utilize each time they visit the Events Calendar on our website. One of the functions of this new software is something called Broadcast, which allows us to upload images and information to the screens in the Library. The goal is to use these digital monitors to promote upcoming programs and important information about the Library and, ultimately, replace the use of print posters and materials. The screens are currently located in the lobby, above the book returns inside the building, and at the top of the stairs. Our hope is to install additional screens sometime in 2022. We'd like to express our sincerest thanks to the Friends, who very generously provided the screens (another benefit of your membership donation) and we encourage you to stop and take a look the next time you're visiting the Library. We hope you'll learn something new about the Library or find a program you're interested in attending!



Above the FOL table 2nd floor.



Above the Library book return.

WIN A NY TIMES BEST SELLER!

Become a member (or renew your membership) in the Friends of the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Library at the \$10 level or higher before February 28, 2022, and be eligible to win a NY Times Best Selling Book of your choice!



Join or renew now and receive a coupon (see membership levels for amount), in time for the Winter Used Book Sale (February 10-13, 2022). Membership forms are available online.

[Download a Membership Form](#)



In the lobby, too.

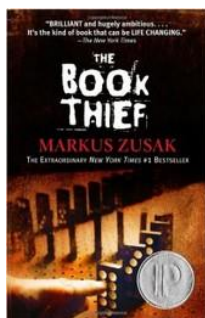


TWO TOWNS - ONE BOOK CELEBRATES ITS TENTH ANNIVERSARY IN 2022 JO ANNE ROBBINS

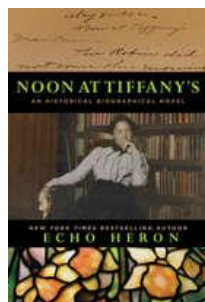
Something very ^{*}magical^{*} can happen when you
READ A ^{*}GOOD BOOK^{*}
-J.K. Rowling

COVID continues to impact our library and our TTOB steering committee decision-making. This year, we celebrate the tenth year of our Community Read. Of course our 2022 book, *Finding Dorothy* by Elizabeth Letts, is another great book that is sure to inspire our readers and, as always, offer interesting aspects that generate activities and programs. We hope that, despite COVID, you will read the book and try to participate in one of our Community Read activities.

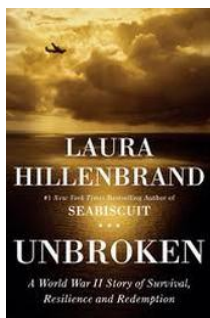
2011-2012



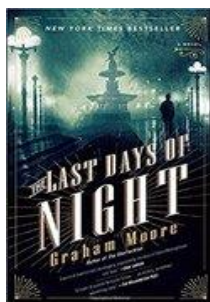
2016-2017



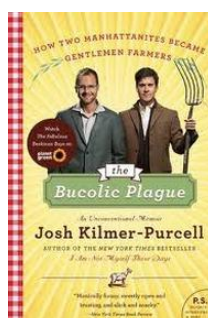
2012-2013



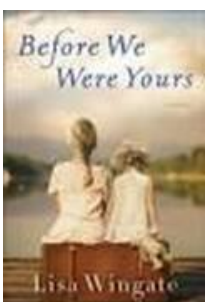
2017-2018



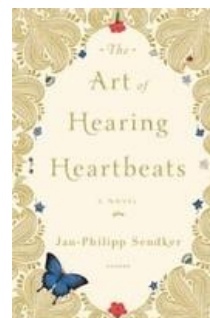
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2018-2019



2014-2015



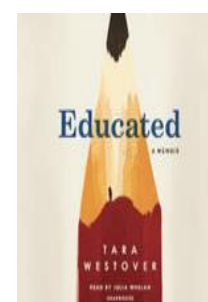
2019-2020



2015-2016



2019-2020



How many of these great reads have you read? Which book appealed to you initially? Which book did you nominate? What was your favorite book and why? Which program you attended was the most inspiring? Which books did your book club read? Which book was disappointing and why? Have you participated in planning a TTOB activity? Please share your opinion by answering these questions and sending your comments to editor, [Jo Anne Robbins](#).

OUR LIBRARY CELEBRATES 15 YEARS ON MOE ROAD KATHY ADAM BROWNE



On December 11, the Library on Moe Road celebrated 15 years since the doors were opened to the Clifton Park and Halfmoon communities. From the very start, the Library was recognized as a state-of-the art facility with beautiful furnishings and touches of the history of the two towns.

In the 15 years since its opening, programming has diversified and grown both for children and adults. Advances in technology have enhanced remote access to many library materials and created the need for a wide variety of basic and

advanced computer classes. Traditional services and digital services exist side by side in a facility that is an important destination for local residents as well as visitors from other areas.

At the heart of the Library is an innovative staff that finds new ways of providing service even in the challenging times of a COVID pandemic. Curbside pick-up, grab and go crafts for children and Zoom programs on a vast array of topics kept the Library available to all through difficult times.

The Library is an ever growing, ever changing institution that continues to thrive because it meets and accepts challenges and change.

TRAVELS WITH RHONA RHONA KORETZKY FORMAN



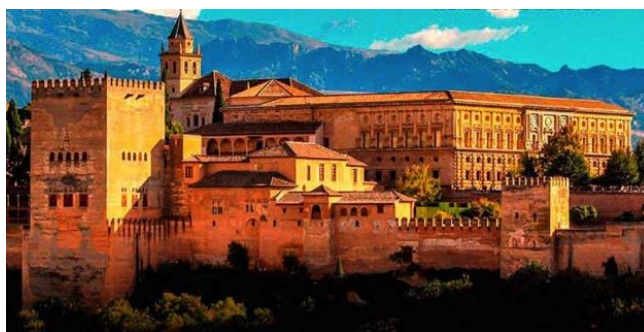
Chittenango, New York Canal



Durango and Silverton Railroad, Colorado

Exciting news! We have scheduled our first FOL sponsored bus trip since 2019. In conjunction with the TTOB selection, *Finding Dorothy*, we will travel to Chittenango, New York on Saturday, May 7 to visit three sites of significance in the life of L Frank Baum, the creator of *The Wizard of Oz*. Baum was a central New York native whose family owned a barrel business. We will see the site where the barrels were shipped through the canal at the Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum. We will also tour the All Things Oz Museum, a collection of memorabilia related to the books and movie, and the Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation. Gage was a suffragette and the mother-in-law of Baum, and she is credited with encouraging him to write the Oz stories. Participation in this trip will be limited due to museum and bus capacities. All travelers must present covid vaccine documentation and masks must be worn at all times on the bus and inside the venues. The cost for this trip is \$75 for FOL members and \$80 for non-members. This includes bus transportation, driver gratuity and admission to all sites. Registration will open on February 1.

The FOL will also be traveling further westward in May! The Colorado Rockies tour, which has been rescheduled twice, is now departing on May 27, 2022. Highlights of



Alhambra, Granada, Spain



Chefchaouen (the Blue City), Morocco

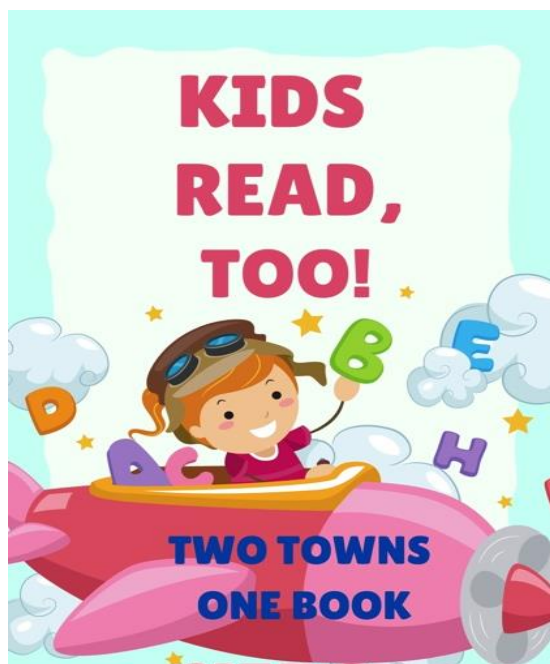
this trip include Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado National Monument (a seldom visited gem), a VIP tour of Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park (another underrated gem), the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, Mesa Verde National Park, Arches National Park and Pike's Peak. There is very limited availability so please contact FOL travel coordinator Rhona Koretzky Forman if you would like more information, including pricing.

It was very disappointing to cancel our planned March 2022 trip to Southern Spain and Morocco due to COVID concerns. The trip has been rescheduled and will now depart on March 18, 2023. Highlights of the itinerary include Madrid, Seville, Cordoba, the Alhambra, Casablanca, Marrakech, and Chefchaouen. Registration for the trip will begin on January 1, 2022. This trip is a wonderful opportunity to experience two cultures on different continents, separated by a narrow strait.

Please note that vaccine documentation and COVID testing as well as masks will be necessary for all trips in accordance with all mandates and guidelines.

For additional information regarding our travel program, contact Rhona at rkoretzky@yahoo.com.

Happy holidays! Stay positive, test negative!



THE STORY OF THE PEACE CRANE SAN FRANCISCO CRANE SOCIETY

Sadako Sasaki (佐々木 禎子), who survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945 when she was two years old, developed leukemia at age 12. She started folding origami cranes, following ancient Japanese lore that folding 1,000 cranes would grant a wish. According to her brother, Sadako folded more than 1,000 cranes before she died in October of 1955; cranes she folded have been donated to significant places, including Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and the 9/11 memorial in New York.

If you would like to know more about this peace project and making origami cranes, visit the [Peace Project Website](#).

Or watch this video: 'How to Make an Easy Origami Crane.' [FEATURED VIDEO](#)



KIDS READ, TOO CAROL DAVIS

'Kids Read, Too' subcommittee of the Two Towns - One Book program has, over the last 10 years, provided bibliographies, activity guides, programs and book recommendations for our younger readers that revolved around themes related to the titles chosen for the adult readers in the community.

Over the years we have made 1,000 paper cranes for peace and sent them to the Peace Pagoda in Japan, drew hundreds of butterflies and sent them to the Houston Holocaust Museum to join in one million collected to represent the one million children who perished during the Holocaust. Using Stewart's Holiday Match Grants and working with community partners such as the Shenendehowa Food Service, the YMCA After School Center, Captain's after school group, and others, we have brought in programs from the World's Children's Museum in Glens Falls, the out-reach programs from the Schenectady Science Museum and Planetarium, Scotia- Glenville Traveling Museum and many others. We have participated in Shenendehowa's Science night, Shensational, and Clifton Park's Winterfest as well. The Kids Read, Too program encourages our younger readers to read, discuss and explore their world through books and use books as a way to connect with family, friends and community, near and far.

This year, because of Covid restrictions and protocols, we have created a project that will allow children to be involved at home. The Kids Read, Too programming for 2022 is described on page 3. Parents and Grandparents may participate with their children and grandchildren; a wonderful way for families to join together in exploring our world and our community read programming.



Reading can
be magical!

COVID IS STRESSFUL . . . JUST TAKE A BREATH AND RELAX

JO ANNE ROBBINS

Yes, just take a deep breath, relax, and slow down. Need a suggestion or two? Please read on . . .

[Headspace](#) is an app for meditation. You can focus on different areas you want to address, like anxiety or self-esteem. It is available on desktop, iOS, and Android. A limited amount of content is available for free, while unlocking all courses costs \$13/month or \$70/year.

[Colorfy](#) is a form of digital art therapy that decreases stress and anxiety, improves concentration, and even improves symptoms of depression. Download it for free to use on iOS and Android, with in-app purchases to expand the coloring options.

[Happify](#) is a self-improvement app that provides science-backed ideas to improve your happiness while reducing stress and worry levels. It consists of a set of exercises to help combat stress, strengthen relationships, and work on being kinder to yourself. It is also free for both Apple and android users.

Finally, why not read something new, or learn about arts and culture?

[This webpage](#) contains 100 websites to legally download literature, inclusive of classic literature, textbooks, as well as other academic publications.

Ever wanted to visit the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, or the Palace of Versailles in France? [Google Arts and Culture](#) offers free virtual tours of museums worldwide, which you can access through this link. Enjoy a day [traipsing through digital walls of world-renowned art](#) all from the comforts of your own home.

We all know that COVID and culture wars have created a tumultuous time globally, and you have probably read that it is completely normal to feel like your world is whirling out of control. So, take some time each day to do something good for yourself so you can return some encouragement to a friend or relative. In this age of social ups-man-ship, recognize that you have a right to your opinion, but also allow others that same privilege.



Quiet conversation and kindness reduce stress. Recognize that others have a right to their opinion.



Exercising indoors or outdoors has benefits. Do something active at least 3 times a week.



Let's work and play together, recognizing boundaries, with respect and in peace

WHERE WE ARE NOW

WILMA JOZWIAK

It's surreal to find that, almost two years after the CDC confirmed the first case in the United States, we are still living in the time of covid. The impact has been horribly uneven, with some losing their lives, or everything that matters to them, while others have been insulated from the worst of it, but all of us have been impacted in ways that we still are learning about. I reached out to members of our community to find out what it has been like for them, and where they find themselves today. I promised everyone their thoughts would be presented anonymously so they'd feel okay sharing their thoughts and feelings. As you will see, there's plenty of sad to go around, but we also learned some things about ourselves and how we can maintain connection in an isolated world. I hope that very soon, we'll no longer need to practice mitigation as covid becomes a manageable threat, but that we don't lose sight of the things we've learned through these couple of years.

Several people found isolation from family and friends the hardest to handle:

"...we could not see our children or grandchildren and couldn't go to their homes to celebrate our holidays together. We have no children in this area except a granddaughter and family ... but we still didn't see them because her children were younger than 5, so they could not be vaccinated."

"The most difficult time for me was not being able to see my family. We are very close and get together often and not being to do that was so hard. Especially sad was not being able to hold my great grandson."

"[It was so hard] having a drive-by Christmas last year and not seeing family and friends for so long."

"I miss singing with my friends! If you've seen the movie *Fisherman's Friends*, you're familiar with pub sings and sea shanties. Since the 1960's the Capital District has had a group of "folkies" who get together frequently to play and sing. For the last decade or more, we've been meeting [monthly at a local establishment to sing together]. There are neurological studies proving that people who sing together synchronize their heartbeats, and harmony singers develop a sense of community. Now these singers of peace protest songs and Clearwater clean river songs are

approaching 80, among the most vulnerable to the plague. We tried singing on Zoom, but there's a disconcerting time lag that makes it impossible. We tried singing with masks, but that wasn't great, and one needs liquid for the throat."

The impact on children has sometimes been subtle, but easy to understand when it is unpacked. A third grade teacher put it into perspective for me:

"All of the kids missed most of their second grade experience in person, some missed all of it. It has made a difference for them in terms of understanding how to negotiate third grade both academically and socially. Added to that are the very important covid mitigation practices that keep us safe, but prevent us from doing intense small group instruction and from using some of the individual interventions that in past years would have helped kids process and be more successful, especially with social situations."

There are a few memes on the internet that play on the "every day is Blursday" feeling of isolation that seemed to make everything more difficult, something someone put into words this way:

"The most difficult thing about the pandemic for me personally is that everything becomes a struggle; planning shopping to go early in the morning so no one is in the store, struggling to remember what you walked into the kitchen for (Covid fog, I guess), [and] the sameness of the days, like "Groundhog Day". Almost not worth getting up for, thankfully, [I] have a dog!"

For others, a family member contracted the virus, and the most comforting was the support of a loving community:

"Of course, the most difficult thing by far was knowing that in spite of all my son's best efforts with vaccines and masking he almost lost his own battle with covid. Not being able to see him was excruciating. We all made it through with the love and support of our family, friends and even acquaintances who just CARE."

Finding oneself on the other side of the contentious vaccination debate has been hard for some people: "I think one of most difficult things for me is not understanding how people can be so selfish by choosing

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to not get vaccinated. It is so frustrating.”

“I am very vulnerable due to a couple of auto-immune disorders, and I struggle not to be hurt when I hear from friends that they are hesitant, or simply unwilling, to get a vaccination that would make it possible for me to see them in person at some point.”

Other people had long established social connections like book groups, choirs, and writing groups that had to change shape to continue but morphed in unexpectedly good ways:

“I have become part of a group who taken a writing class through Zoom early in the pandemic and decided to continue as a group as things dragged on. Several of us were acquainted through earlier, in-person writing classes, so I was surprised how deeply our friendships have developed in the virtual format as we have shared many elements of our lives through writing and helped each other through difficult experiences. I’m not at all sure we would have become such good friends if covid had not forced us into this Zoom relationship.”

“My book club changed completely when the pandemic caused the library to close, and – much to our astonishment – it’s been wonderful. Since we couldn’t all read the same book in the same month, and since we couldn’t meet inside and share platters of goodies, we bundled up, brought our own chairs and munchies, and spread out on the lawns of our hosts’ homes. Each of the five of us tend to read three to four books a month, so our meetings became a marathon of synopses and recommendations. Some brought recent publications they’d bought new, others dug out favorites from used book sales. As the summer of 2020 wore on, we discovered that we loved arriving with a bag of books and departing with a bag of totally different books. We quickly learned whose taste was most like our own, and vied for “first dibs” on their books. We developed a system of sticky notes to indicate who’d read a book, and who was interested and in queue. Knowing who was waiting for me to finish – plus, of course, having more time to read than I’d ever had in my life – I was motivated to finish before the next book club meeting. As Old Man Winter drives us indoors and Omicron surprises us with unexpected R0 factors, we’ll again be using the Zoom skills we developed last winter (Thank you, Mary Carrier at CPH Library for the lessons), and leaving books in plastic wrappers inside people’s front doors.”

And there were other, decidedly “guilty” pleasures that I’m pretty sure many of us would have to admit to if we are honest:

“The most difficult thing about the pandemic for me was allowing myself to enjoy the gift of pandemic induced free time without feeling guilty about it. For me, the most difficult thing about the pandemic (aside from the looming specter of Covid) is not what you might expect. Many people found the time apart and isolation from society frustrating, and the lack of the usual hectic daily routine maddening. Admittedly it was a shock at first, but I feel fortunate that I was able to settle in quickly to a new normal of time by myself - spent in the yard or in a chair with a book, time to tackle chores and clean out the dark recesses of closets and cubbies. When friends and family complained about being alone, I nodded in empathy - when really what I felt was a sense of guilt about enjoying time by myself. It may sound selfish, but the hardest part of the pandemic for me was telling myself it was ok to stay in and be a hermit - to catch up on my reading, write some letters to friends and family, have time to be nostalgic about cleaning out 20 years of kids’ projects and old cards. Maybe I’m not alone in this. It’s a huge difference if we compare our situations now to what they were a year ago, and I hope that everyone is ready to greet 2022 with a clear head and a fresh approach to life.”

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