

Children's story becomes a community project

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People and Places Agnes Jasinski

Phil Shapiro may call himself the "public geek" of the Takoma Park Maryland Library, but his most recent venture has become somewhat of a public service.

Shapiro, who works at the library as an instructional assistant, hopes to blend new media with cultural awareness by finding translators to bring a short story he wrote alive in at least 10 different languages.

"I think it might be possible to have a tradition where people work on collaborative projects," Shapiro said. "Takoma Park is creative in that way."

"Sammy's Autograph Book" is a short tale about a boy who receives a blank signature book for his 10th birthday. Feeling discouraged that he would never be able to fill up the book in his small town, he asks potential signers to include a few sentences about someone they consider their hero.

Shapiro already offers the story online in Swedish and Japanese. Shuko Tamao, a co-worker at the library, volunteered to translate the story into Japanese, and a library visitor translated it into Swedish. The next venture is Amharic, an indigenous language of Ethiopia. The translator was a visitor to the library.

"The idea of an autograph book may not really translate in a small village in a faraway place, but the theme, looking for the best in people ... is universal," Shapiro said.

Shapiro also enlisted the help of Tammy Fulton, a mom-turned-art designer who came into the library, to illustrate the story. Shapiro hopes news of his project will catch on in other cities.

For more information, e-mail Shapiro at pshapiro@his.com. To view "Sammy's Autograph Book," visit <http://sammybook.blogspot.com>.

Folk festival gets a little 'greener'

Cleanup for food vendors at this year's Takoma Park Folk Festival will be a little bit easier. Nadine Bloch, a Takoma Park resident, and a volunteer-based Takoma Park biodiesel collective will be picking up cooking oil used by merchants to recycle into usable biodiesel.

"It's to reduce the dependency on petroleum products," said Bloch, who was enlisted by festival groundskeeper Nancy Nickell for the partnership this year.

Bloch's collective has been offering recycled biodiesel for several years. If this year's experiment is successful, the festival could expand the initiative in the future by using recycled biodiesel in its currently fuel-powered generators.

"At all these events, the disposal of cooking oil is a real issue. You can't just pour it down a drain or on the grass of the soccer field," said Kevin Adler, chairman of the festival. "Not only is this a way to eliminate our disposal problems, but we can turn that into a positive as well."

Last year was the first time the festival had full-scale recycling on site, led by volunteers who collected the trash and separated recyclables. Adler hopes the festival will continue to improve on its environmental-friendliness.

"We want the festival to be green," Adler said. "We can see our ability to do that expanding."

The Takoma Park Folk Festival will be held Sept. 10. For more information, e-mail info@tpff.org.

Cosmic bowling night

The Takoma Park Presbyterian Church will hold its first annual cosmic bowling night 7 to 10 p.m. Friday at White Oak Lanes, 11207 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring.

The \$12 fee for adults and \$9 fee for children includes unlimited bowling, shoe rental and music.

For more information, call 301-270-5550, or e-mail kielytkmprk@aol.com to ensure a spot in one of the reserved lanes.

Put on your dancing shoes

The Liz Lerman Dance Exchange will host an open house 6 to 8:30 p.m. Aug. 31 with sample classes for both beginners and the sure-footed. The first family-friendly eight-week session begins the week of Sept. 5.

The non-profit studio offers four eight-week sessions, with classes in Latin Aerobics, World Technique, Mature Movers and ballet, among others. Several of the children's classes coordinate with Willow Street Yoga Center next door.

Classes cost \$15 per lesson, or \$75 per eight-week session. The studios were recently renovated and now have three new light-filled dance rooms ready for use.

The dance studio also offers a weeklong teen intensive through its National Teen Institute. The theme this year is "risk," in which teens will learn how to use the visual and performing arts to develop their choice-making skills, said Sarah Priestman, communications manager at Liz Lerman.

"This is an opportunity for teens to use dance, movement and the spoken word in a creative environment," Priestman said.

The teen group will total about 20 participants once full. Registration is required by Monday. The weeklong session has been discounted from \$400 to \$100, to "widen the circle" of people who can attend, Priestman said. Participants also will be involved in a performance in Baltimore.

Liz Lerman Dance Exchange is located at 7117 Maple Ave. in Takoma Park. For more information, visit www.danceexchange.org, or call 301-270-6700.

Parlez-vous Francais?

This week's "Club de conversation Francaise," or French conversation club meeting will involve a discussion of the Albert Camus short story "Jonas." The story is about a formerly poor artist who finds himself in the spotlight, only to be troubled by this new recognition of his work. Participants are welcome to read the story in English.

The club meets 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Tuesdays. This week's meeting is at the Savory Café at 7071 Carroll Ave. in Takoma Park.

Meetings are free. For more information, call 301-270-2233.

Name that folk tune

The Folklore Society of Greater Washington will hold its August "open sing" 8:30 to 11:30 p.m. Friday.

Open sings are held the first Friday every month at homes of Folklore Society members.

The topic Friday night will be "animals," with extra credit for cat songs.

"Whoever the host is, is the one who calls the theme... and I'm a cat person," said this month's host and Folklore Society member Vince Wilding.

Themes are meant to encourage singers to learn new songs and revisit old ones. During the open sings, everyone has a chance to sing a song, play a tune or pass. The open sing will be located at 4231 Isbell St. in Silver Spring.

For more information, e-mail Vince@VinceWilding.com.

Long Branch bridgecommunity meeting

The Long Branch Advisory Committee will hold a community meeting 7 p.m. Aug. 14 at the Long Branch Community Center, 8700 Piney Branch Road, to discuss the proposed pedestrian link between the community center and library. The link is intended to provide a pedestrian connection between major community resources. The Department of Housing and Community Affairs is the lead agency developing the designs; no designs have been developed yet. Participants should wear comfortable shoes; they will tour the project site.

Send Takoma Park news to Agnes Jasinski at The Gazette, 8650 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910. The fax line is 301-562-3262. Items can be e-mailed to ajasinski@gazette.net. Deadline is one week prior to publication.