
Going wild for Valley Reads: 'Wilderness' the theme of annual community-wide reading program

By KRIS JANISCH

kjanisch@acnpapers.com

(Created: Tuesday, March 24, 2009 12:53 PM CDT)

While Valley Reads is all about getting people's noses into a good book, this year organizers are giving readers a chance to enjoy the outdoors.

ArtReach Alliance on Monday announced this year's selections for Valley Reads - a communitywide reading program that asks residents to read the same books - and a host of other events to go with them. Several of those events will take people outdoors, reflecting this year's theme: "wildness."

"It's the idea of celebrating our environment, our unique northern ecosystem, and how we connect with that," said Jessica Pack, executive director of ArtReach Alliance, the Stillwater-based nonprofit organizing the event.

Now in its fifth year, the Valley Reads selections for 2009 are:

- "Ordinary Wolves," by Seth Kantner, the young adult and up selection.
- "My Side of the Mountain," by Jean Craighead George, the ages 8 and up selection.
- "Antler Bear Canoe," by Betsy Bowen, the all-ages picture book selection.

Although Valley Reads will again include author visits, discussion groups and story time events, one new feature this year is a "Valley Reads Passport," which asks people to complete a number of tasks - such as wildlife photography and attending an Earth Day event at Camp St. Croix - for a chance to win gift certificates to area booksellers.

"This year we have a lot of exciting things going on," Pack said.

The events begin on April 13, when Bowen will visit Houlton (Wis.) Elementary, and continue until April 26. Other ways for participants to get involved with the Valley Reads program include submitting poetry to ArtReach online, checking out an April 18 falconing demonstration at Boutwells Landing and a woodcut printmaking class at The Phipps Center for the Arts on April 21 and 25.

Also of note this year is an exhibit on environmental sustainability called "Paradise Lost," a University of Wisconsin initiative held at the River Falls (Wis.) Public Library. There are funds available for school groups that want to check out the exhibit, Pack said.

Each year, a group of 12-15 area literature buffs get together to brainstorm themes for Valley Reads, discussing the books they have read of late as "a theme kind of boils to the top," Pack said.

The intent of Valley Reads is "to create conversations based on the books, but also to create that connection in the community around a central theme and to bring people together to celebrate literature," Pack said. "And this year, have that literature help us understand wildness."

The partners for this year's Valley Reads are: ArtReach Alliance, Back to Books, Bayport Public Library, Boutwells Landing, Hudson Area Joint Library, Hudson School District, The Phipps Center for the Arts, River Falls Public Library, Stillwater Area Public Schools Community Education, Stillwater Public Library, The Valley Bookseller, Washington County Library and What We Need is Here.

For more information visit www.valleyreads.org.

The Stillwater Gazette is published daily Monday-Friday
This website and all its contents ©2005 The Stillwater Gazette.
[Do Not Call Policy](#)

651-439-3130 stwgztte@acnpapers.com

