

Poetry Slam Draws Eclectic Crowd

“What are you all doing down here tonight? Do you realize what you’re missing on television?” poet Armando Garcia-Dávila asked the more than 100 people gathered on a warm Friday night in May for Sonoma County Library’s final poetry slam of the season, the Grand Slam.

Garcia-Dávila, the host of the 2008 Grand Slam, was, of course, being facetious, and his audience of poets and slam poetry enthusiasts clearly knew it. After all, what television show could possibly beat the live drama of a slam? The people who showed up at Santa Rosa Central Library for last season’s final slam spent the evening laughing, crying, cheering, and booing as poet after poet performed original pieces on topics ranging from unrequited love to the Catholic church to the plight of being labeled “disabled.”

“I enjoy the blend of young and old that come to the slams,” said audience participant Georgette deBlois. “I was surprised to find that it’s not just a sea of gray heads listening quietly to readings of classic poetry. I really like hearing the younger people. I like watching their hip hop moves, and I enjoy their spontaneity. I find them inspiring.”

The Library will sponsor at least seven poetry slams during the 2008–2009 season. There will be cash prizes, courtesy of the Library Foundation, totaling \$500.

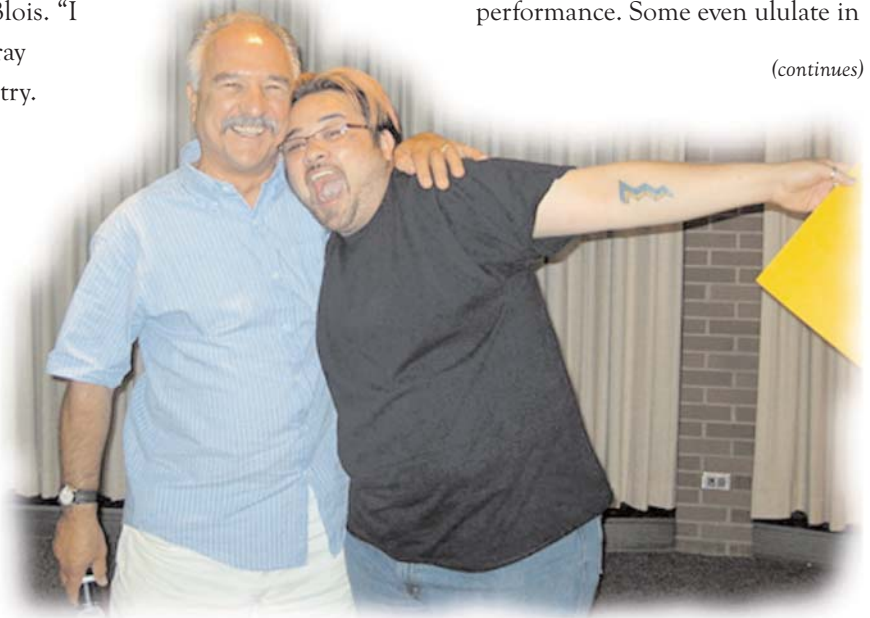
Poet Armando Garcia-Dávila congratulates –GO, a 35-year-old artist and producer from Fairfield who won first place in the Library’s 2008 Grand Slam. –GO will be the emcee at the Library’s poetry slams in the upcoming season.

The opening slam will be held on September 19 from 7 to 9 P.M. at Santa Rosa Central Library. Doors open at 6:45 P.M. To find dates and times of future slams, ask at a library reference desk or check the website at www.sonomalibrary.org/programs/PoetrySlams.html.

Started in 1986 in Chicago as a way of enticing younger people to attend poetry readings, competitive poetry slams quickly evolved into a worldwide phenomenon. The slams sponsored by the Sonoma County Library are competitions in which poets perform original works no longer than three minutes and without props. Five judges randomly selected from the audience score the performances. Judges must be at least 16 years old, but there’s no age limits for competitors.

Audience participants are encouraged to voice their approval or disapproval of both the poets and their judges by clapping or booing. Some people snap their fingers when they like a particular performance. Some even ululate in

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Librarian Vandy Tompkins welcomes the audience to the Grand Slam held at Santa Rosa Central Library on May 16, 2008.

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excitement. The winners face off at the Grand Slam held each year in May. Each competition is preceded by an open mic portion during which anyone of any age can perform a poem of his or her own or of someone else's without being officially judged.

The 2008 Grand Slam drew an eclectic mix of poets. Among the performers were Mike Bastone, an 86-year-old retired English teacher, who read his earnest piece about the hawkish inclinations of national leaders; Elizabeth Neylon, a 56-year-old masseuse with long silver braids, who performed her ode to medical marijuana; a teenaged girl from a residential drug rehab treatment facility, who read her dark reflection about the father she never knew. And Adam Williams, a barefoot 23-year-old Sonoma State University environmental studies major, who brought the crowd to tears with his elegy for a first love who died tragically while swimming in rough waters in Thailand.

"Poetry is a primal art," said Len Gambin, last season's Sonoma County slam winner and this year's emcee. "You don't need fancy paints or instruments. All you need is paper and pen, and you can change the world."

First slam of the 2008/2009 season:

September 19, 7–9 P.M.

Santa Rosa Central Library

Doors open at 6:45 P.M.

Upcoming Sonoma County Big Read: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

There's been a recent migration of mockingbirds to Sonoma County. Not birds with feathers and wings, but rather ones with pages, as in books.

Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is this year's featured selection of *The Big Read, Sonoma County*, a community reading program that kicks off on September 20 at the Sonoma County Book Festival. Hundreds of copies of the book, purchased by the Sonoma County Library Foundation, will be available for loan at the county's 13 libraries. Copies of the book and readers guides also will appear at local schools, community centers, and other gathering places.

The Big Read, which runs through October 31, will sponsor group discussions, dramatic readings, art exhibits, plays, and radio and television programs. The Library will host discussions of *To Kill a Mockingbird* throughout the county. To view the entire list of *The Big Read, Sonoma County* activities, check out www.bigreadsonoma.com or call Robin Metalitz at KRCB at 707-584-2005. Funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts, *The Big Read* aims to encourage reading by people of all ages and backgrounds, particularly reluctant readers who rarely crack a book.

Along with the communitywide activities, *The Big Read, Sonoma County* awards mini-grants of \$100 to \$500 to schools, senior centers, performing arts groups, and other organizations to fund projects involving *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Partners in coordinating *The Big Read, Sonoma County* include KRCB Television and Radio, the Arts Council of Sonoma County, Santa Rosa Junior College, Sonoma State University, Sonoma County Library, and Sonoma County Public Library Foundation.

After the program ends, dozens of copies of the book will be donated by the Library to schools and community centers. Also, sets of *To Kill a Mockingbird* will be available for members of private book clubs to check out from the library.



Harper Lee, author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*



*New Sonoma County Library
Commission Chair Margaret Lynch*

Meet New Library Commission Chair Margaret Lynch

As the new chair of the Sonoma County Library Commission, Margaret Lynch, a San Francisco State University professor who holds a Ph.D. in developmental psychology, hopes to enhance library services by making the countywide library system a better place to work for its employees.

“We have a fabulous group of employees working for the Sonoma County Library,” she said in a recent interview. “Our challenge is to create an environment that really maximizes their potential. And I think the commission, being at the top of that organizational structure, needs to focus on this challenge in partnership with our excellent director.”

Lynch, who has been a member of the commission since 2004 and began serving as its chair last March, acknowledged that public funding for libraries most likely will be limited for the foreseeable future given California’s current budget constraints. But enhancing workplace dynamics, she said, takes not money but a shift in attitude.

“If your organization’s number one priority is the people who work for you, then I truly believe that everything else falls into place,” she

said. “I would like us to be the kind of organization in which people want to find jobs and in which they want to spend their careers because they are happy and fulfilled.”

The daughter of a career military officer, Lynch was born in Missoula, Montana, but lived in many different places throughout her childhood. She moved from San Francisco to Sebastopol in 1989. She’s been married for 36 years and has two grown sons and a granddaughter.

A longtime library patron herself, Lynch says she believes libraries “can be the heart and soul of a community.”

“I strongly believe in libraries as the last truly democratic institution,” she says. “The library is accessible to absolutely everyone. That’s its hallmark, and I think it’s extraordinary. Public schools are open to everybody, but the experience you have depends on where you live and what kind of school you go to. Libraries all offer virtually the same service. And they offer so much for everyone.”

Good News for Mac Users

There’s good news on the horizon for library cardholders who own Macintosh computers and iPods. With the advent of new technology now in development, Mac users soon will be able to join PC users in downloading free audiobooks from the library’s website.



The downloadable audiobook service has been available to PC users since January. But due to digital rights management issues, Mac and iPod owners haven’t been able to use the service. Now, OverDrive, Inc., the company providing the digital audiobook files to the library, is developing a Mac-compatible format. The Sonoma County Library plans to buy titles in the new format as soon as the new technology proves workable. However, due to publishers’ concerns about copyright issues, not every title will be available in the new format.

Once titles are available in the new format, cardholders will need to choose which format of a particular title to download depending on the type of equipment they own.



Join the Library at the 9th Annual Sonoma County Book Festival

- Saturday September 20, 2008
10 A.M.—5 P.M.
- Old Courthouse Square in
downtown Santa Rosa

Free Admission!

For more info: www.socobookfest.org

\$35 Goes a Long Way

Charlene Bunas

President of the Sonoma County Library Foundation

When you send in a tax-deductible contribution to the Sonoma County Public Library, it helps educate, entertain, and enlighten. Let me illustrate:

Last Tuesday morning I took our grandson, Aiden, to his first Storytime at the library. This normally squirmy 18 month old sat quietly in my lap and looked around. He saw two boys at the computer having fun while learning English. He saw other youngsters sitting at the knees of the librarian-storyteller. He experienced books, songs, and finger puppets. He loved it . . . until it was time to leave. His meltdown led me to believe we left with his wanting more.

And that's just what library programs offer . . . more: more for wee ones, more for toddlers, more

for school kids, for teens, and more for adults. The Library boasts its own Wine Library, and there is a Local History and Genealogy Library annex. Library branches open their doors for book discussion groups, for lectures and classes,



The summer reading program helps young people catch the reading bug.

and for poetry slams. For the nonreader, every branch offers tutoring services. Whether you're 18 months, 18, or 88 years old, there are library programs just waiting for you.

Let's face it, the library is just about the last free way to get a priceless education or a lifetime of enjoyment.

Or almost free. If everyone reading this article contributed \$35.00, the results would be unbelievable. It is the generous donations from our community that keep our library alive. It is precisely because of public contributions that Storytime, and other special times, happens every week for all kids, even for grandsons like Aiden.



Support Your Library!

Remember visiting your neighborhood library as a young child? Remember getting your first library card and coming home with a big stack of books?

Now you can help ensure that the next generation of Sonoma County's children grows up with their own fond memories of the library.

Please help by making a donation today. Your gift will allow the Library to add to its collection of books and materials and expand programs and services. A reply envelope is included for your convenience.

Sebastopol Volunteer Leader Retires

It's two days before a book sale at the Sebastopol Regional Library, and the Friends of the Sebastopol Library volunteers are running around, setting up tables of donated books, and getting ready for the crowds.

For the first time in 28 years, Louise Johnston is not among them. Instead, the newly retired president of the Sebastopol Friends is at home, playing her long-neglected piano and pausing to reminisce about her many years of involvement with the library.

"I feel bad not helping with the sale, but now that I'm turning 86, I decided it was time for me to step aside," Johnston explains. "I have a wonderful team. I'm sure the Friends will carry on the same as ever. No one's indispensable."

Sue Fujita, the new Sebastopol Friends president, has her doubts about how easy it will be to carry on without Louise's leadership. "Taking over for Louise is daunting," she said. "It's going to take an awful lot of people to get everything done that Louise used to do herself."

In fact, it will take about four or five people to do all the jobs that Louise handled herself. For years, she publicized and ran the book sales, oversaw the donations of books, and published the quarterly Friends' newsletter and supervised its mailing. Volunteers will take over all her jobs except one: she'll continue to help sort donated books. "That's the one job I'll keep doing," Johnston said.

"A man going through microfilm of old newspapers came across an article about my father's role in the library and gave me a copy," Johnston recalled. "I thought, *Good heavens, library involvement ran in the family.*"

Johnston, who grew up in Sebastopol, attended Stanford University but left during World War II to replace her twin brother in his job at the bank when he joined the Navy. She later spent two years in the Waves, where she met her husband, Don. After the war, she



OWEN SCOTT SHIRVO

began a 26-year career as an elementary school teacher. She became the Friends' president in 1980 after retiring from teaching. She served two years on the Sonoma County Library Foundation and 12 years on the Sonoma County Library Commission. Her husband also served on the Library Foundation and as treasurer of the Sebastopol Friends. "He bought a pickup truck so he could haul cartons of donated books to storage," Johnston recalled. "He hauled books for many years."

Johnston learned only after getting involved in the library herself that her father, A. B. Swain, had served as secretary of the Sebastopol Library Committee before she was born and had applied to the Carnegie Foundation in 1911 for the grant that helped fund the building of Sebastopol's old Carnegie Library.

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Under Johnston's leadership, the Friends' book sales numbers have skyrocketed. "When I first got involved, if we made \$500 on a sale, we thought that was really great," Johnston recalled. "Then it went up to \$1,000, and then \$10,000." It also was Johnston's idea to set up the sale tables of paperbacks at the libraries. Those sales net about \$500 a month for the Sebastopol library alone.

With all her new free time, Johnston hopes to get back to playing her piano and to reading. "I'll miss the library in many ways," she said. "It's been a very satisfying hobby."

◆ Sebastopol Regional Library: Check It Out

Housed in a brick building a block off Main Street, the Sebastopol Regional Library is at the center of the action in downtown Sebastopol. It's a short walk to the library from the senior center, city hall, the town swimming pool, the post office, the hospital, and most other downtown shops and destinations.

Toddlers and their young parents, entrepreneurs with laptops, homeschoolers, and older folks are among those sharing the jam-packed 10,000-square-foot facility. The library serves a population of 40,000 in the West County, drawing from an area that stretches from the Russian River in the north, west to the coast, south to the border with Cotati and Rohnert Park, and east to the city limits of Santa Rosa. Besides Sebastopol, it serves the towns of Bodega, Bodega Bay, Occidental, Freestone, and Graton.

"Some people say it's like the neighborhood pub," says library manager Arlene Kallen. "There are the people who come in regularly, but there are always new people who are discovering it for the first time."

Built in 1976, in the same spot where the old 1914 library once stood, the Sebastopol Regional Library long ago outgrew its walls. "A lot of people like the coziness of it, but we're stuffed to the seams with books and materials here," Kallen says.

Sebastopol's library ranks fourth of the county's 13 libraries in the number of books and materials checked out—exceeded only by Santa Rosa Central, Petaluma, and Rohnert Park–Cotati Regional Libraries. It's highest in the number of holds on materials placed, given its population.

"We serve a community that really uses the resources the library has to offer," Kallen says.

Even though some Sebastopol residents recently objected to free wireless Internet access downtown, patrons line up to use the library's wifi network and public access computers. "Because we are serving a rural population that doesn't necessarily have high-speed Internet at home, a lot of people tell us they come in specifically because we have high-speed access," Kallen explains. "They'll tell us they are here because they need to download something that would take them forever to get at home. So we are serving that vital function too."



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Sebastopol Regional Library's cozy shelves

On a recent Wednesday morning, a group of students from the Sebastopol Independent Charter School walked the two blocks from their school to the library, led by parent volunteer Cristina Gosling. On the same morning, Jean Mari Cropsey looked through the library's copies of old Analy High yearbooks. She opened the 1972 yearbook and found a picture of herself at age 14. "There I am," she said. "I'm trying to decide whether to go to my high school reunion."

At the library entrance, Raena Follman applied for a new library card. "I grew up in Sebastopol, and as a kid I was always in this library," Follman said, recounting how her mother would take her and her brother to the library once a week to stock up on books.

Follman, who works as a caregiver for an elderly man, moved from San Diego last year, so returning to the library is part of coming back home.

"The library looks pretty much the same as it used to look when I was a kid," she said. "It's still great. Everyone is very nice, and it's a pleasant, peaceful place."

Check out www.sonomalibrary.org for up-to-date information about Library-sponsored book discussion groups and events for children, teens, and adults.

The Director's Corner

Library Moving to New Technology

Checking out books and materials from the Library is about to get a whole lot easier.

This fall, the Library will begin to implement Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tagging for our library materials. The tags applied to books are about one-inch square and are essentially passive electronic barcodes. Those used for nonprint media are donut shaped. RFID will not compromise patron confidentiality—the tag will contain only the barcode number.

RFID tags are activated when they come within about 18 inches of library equipment that can read them. When a library staff member or patron places library items on a receiver pad and scans a library card, the library item is automatically checked out; in fact, several items can be checked out simultaneously. Items can also be checked back in easily, saving time and energy and simplifying inventory tasks.

Not only is RFID used in many libraries in the United States and worldwide, it is also used in supply chain management for many industries to improve inventory tracking

and management. California's FasTrak uses RFID technology for electronic toll collection.

The Library is adopting RFID to reduce the materials-handling workload for staff, freeing them from routine work to focus on serving our library patrons.

The technology does not threaten anyone's job—but it will allow us to use the people we have more effectively. It also will help us to manage our collection more efficiently with improved security and assistance with inventory management and location of items. The tags will also simplify the checkout process for our library users as we begin to implement self-service technology.

In the months ahead, when you see people moving through the stacks of your local library with special stations, you'll know they're attaching an RFID tag to each item, taking an inventory of our collection, and adding a branch sticker.



Library Director Sandra Cooper

Volunteer Opportunities at the Library

Think you might like to help out at the library? We need you. There are many ways to volunteer your time and energy.

- Help shelve books. Our need for shelvers is constant.
- Learn to help repair books, clip newspaper articles, and search shelves. We'll train you!
- Become a literacy volunteer and help people improve their reading skills.
- Help the Library Foundation raise money for Library programs and materials.
- Help a Friends of the Library group with book sales and other activities.

For most volunteer assignments, no experience is necessary. To explore these and other volunteer opportunities, call or visit your local library or go to www.sonomalibrary.org and click on "How to help the Library."



"Chocolates and Cinema" at the Rialto Cinemas Lakeside

Join us for an evening of chocolate tasting and a screening of *Casablanca*, which won Best Picture in 1943. "Chocolates and Cinema," a fundraiser, benefits the Sonoma County Public Library Foundation.

Place: Rialto Cinemas Lakeside
551 Summerfield Road
Santa Rosa

Date: October 8, 2008

Time: 6:30 P.M.

Price: \$30.00 one ticket
\$50.00 two tickets

Raffle: \$20.00 one ticket
\$50.00 three tickets

(Prizes include a weekend at a beach home, a ski-weekend at a Truckee mountain home, a \$200 spa gift basket, plus much more!)

Because this event is almost always a sell-out, presale tickets are recommended. Tickets may be purchased by sending your check and order to the library (attention Alyce Carmick), by pre-purchasing tickets at the Rialto box office, or by calling 576-7079.



Library Foundation Director Nate Bisbee, left, stands with Ky Boyd, owner of Rialto Cinemas.



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Yummy! Here's My Order

- Yes! I would like to attend the October 8th "Chocolates and Cinema" fundraiser. My check is enclosed.
- Sorry, I can't attend, but I want to support the Library's programs.
- \$30 (one ticket) \$50 (two tickets) \$_____ (donation)

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Please send your check and this form. You can use the envelope attached to the newsletter or mail to

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See you there!

Get a handle on the latest business news. Check out the Library's Business Blog at www.sonomalibrary.org/biz