INSIDE FALL 08
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Broken Bunny and a Half-Eaten Camel: Universal Lessons from Children’s Literature

It’s a pretty graphic scene: two children are pulling on a stuffed toy rabbit, until, with rending stitches, the horrified kids tumble backwards, each holding one cloth ear. The maimed bunny (still smiling) falls to the floor. In *My Friend and I*, Portland author Lisa Jahn-Clough portrays this typical drama: the clash, the ensuing period of chilly relations, and the eventual reconciliation. It’s a solvable conflict, with a storybook ending, as both the bunny and the friendship are soon patched up.

But what happens when things don’t go so well? *Qayb Libaax* is a Somali fable, whose title translates as “The Lion’s Share.” It has recently been retold by Said Salah Ahmed and published as a picture book by the Minnesota Humanities Center, our counterpart in that state. In this tale, a group of animals hunts down a camel, and then tries to divide the meat equitably between themselves and the thuggish lion who rules their part of the dry riverbed. The lion insists on an unreasonable share, and because he is, after all, a lion, there is little the other animals can do but comply. Here there is no hero, no resolution, no justice. It is, alas, a conflict that is every bit as recognizable as the story of the broken bunny, but far less resolved. Like so many problems in our society—from the playground, to the workplace, to the battlefield—it’s a situation that just is.

These are but two of the many stories that we’ve been using in the Maine Humanities Council’s *Peaceable Stories* initiative, a project that uses literature to explore questions of conflict. Stories like this can generate substantive conversations around broad topics of peace, violence, and justice, whether the participants are preschoolers, teachers, or adult new readers.

In keeping with our long-held conviction that the humanities can be a tool for social change, it’s always exciting to me when reading and discussion can be brought to bear on real issues. Whether it’s a children’s book, an essay, or a novel, literature can be a kind of secret empathy weapon, giving readers of all ages a chance to walk in different shoes and see the world through different eyes. It is, in fact, one of the few weapons whose use we actually encourage through *Peaceable Stories*.

Erik Jorgensen
Executive Director
Imagine a world in which everyone loves books…

The Maine Humanities Council has been at work for more than 30 years to help bring books and discussion to Maine and its people statewide. Our mission is “to engage the people of Maine in the power and pleasure of ideas, encouraging a deeper understanding of ourselves and others, fostering wisdom in an age of information, and providing context in a time of change.” We do that through sharing books and ideas with people who love books, and with those who are just beginning to learn to love books, including children under five and low-literacy adults. Books can connect people, communities, and ideas, leading to enrichment of all lives.

The Humanities Tomorrow Society honors the legacy that is established when Maine Humanities Council friends make gifts through wills, estate plans, charitable trusts, or gift annuities. These gifts ensure that humanities programs involving books and ideas will be offered to Mainers for many years to come.

Planned gifts are important for the Maine Humanities Council’s future program success and financial stability. Making a planned gift today not only means an investment in the Council’s future but can also mean, through charitable trusts and gift annuities, financial benefits for you and your family. For many people, a planned gift can be a much larger one than they could make during their lifetimes. As is the case with all qualified donations, significant tax benefits can result, reducing income and estate taxation. Humanities Tomorrow Society Members know that they are making a significant difference in the Maine Humanities Council’s future, keeping books and ideas a part of the future of thousands of Mainers statewide.

For more information on the Maine Humanities Council or its planned giving program, contact Diane Magras, Director of Development at (207) 773-5051 x208 or diane@mainehumanities.org.
FEAR, CIVIL LIBERTIES, AND THE RULE OF LAW

This fall, the Maine Humanities Council is presenting a free, two-part public forum on fear, civil liberties, and the rule of law in the United States. The entire program will take place in both Portland and Bangor:

PORTLAND

Part 1
October 17, 2008
4:30-7:30 PM

Part 2
November 13, 2008
6:00-8:00 PM

BANGOR

Part 1
October 18, 2008
9:00 AM - 12:00 NOON

Part 2
November 13, 2008
6:00-8:00 PM

The question of civil liberties is a heated one in the U.S. today, so the Council is offering the opportunity for thoughtful public discussion of the issue.

Part 1 of this two-part program, “Exploring the Context, Defining the Issues,” will take place on October 17 and 18, in Portland and Bangor respectively. Joel Rosenthal, President of the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, and member of the Maine Humanities Council board, will set the broad historical context, taking into account major events in U.S. history such as the Civil War, the post-WWI Palmer Raids, and McCarthyism.

Jeff McCausland, U.S. Army Colonel (Retired) and Carnegie Council Senior Fellow, will focus on the current debate over issues like detainee policies, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), and the military tribunals in Guantanamo Bay.

Following these presentations, there will be a panel discussion moderated by Mr. Rosenthal. Panelists Shenna Bellows, Executive Director of the Maine Civil Liberties Union; Paula Silsby, the U.S. Attorney for Maine; and Steve Podgajny, Executive Director of the Portland Public Library (in Portland) and Barbara McDade, Executive Director of the Bangor Public Library (in Bangor) will explore what the current situation means for Americans.

Rosenthal is a frequent lecturer and writer on ethics, U.S. foreign policy, and international relations. Under his direction, the Carnegie Council sponsors educational programs for worldwide audiences. He is editor-in-chief of the journal Ethics & International Affairs, and author of Righteous Realists, Ethics and the Future of Conflict (with Albert C. Pierce and Anthony Lang), and “New Rules for War?” in the Naval War College Review (2004), among other works.

McCausland graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1972 and was commissioned in field artillery. He completed his active duty service in 2002, ending his career as Dean of Academics, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. During his military career, McCausland served in a variety of command and staff positions both in the United States and Europe, including as Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control on the National Security Council Staff during the Kosovo crisis. He has published and lectured broadly on military affairs, European security issues, the Gulf War, and leadership throughout the United States and abroad.

Part 2, “The View Through the Lens of Literature,” will follow on November 13, 2008, at both the Portland and Bangor public libraries. Scholar-facilitated discussions of Arthur Miller’s The Crucible will illuminate topics raised in Part 1 of the program, although attendance at Part 1 is not required for participation in the discussion.

For more information and to register, go to www.mainehumanities.org or call (207) 773-5051. Copies of The Crucible will be provided.

This project has received support from the We the People initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities.
Maine is a relatively safe place to live. According to the FBI’s Uniform Crime Report for 2000, it ranked 46th among the states in total crime and 49th in violent crime. But break-ins and hold-ups aren’t the only manifestations of violence, and the conflicts that affect our tranquil towns can be all the more damaging for their insidiousness. Children encounter bullies on our school grounds. Survivors of domestic abuse rebuild their lives under the specter of fear. Refugees from countries at war struggle to integrate their positive memories of home with terrifying flashbacks. Compounded with these first-hand experiences are the conflicts portrayed in the media, both fictional and real, including the very real battles that Maine citizens are fighting overseas on behalf of our country.

In order to address the complexities of conflict with some of Maine’s most vulnerable residents, the Maine Humanities Council recently received $250,000 (for use over three years) from Jane’s Trust to help fund two programs: Peaceable Stories, a program within the Council’s Born to Read early literacy initiative, and “Conflict” and “Resolving Conflict,” two New Books, New Readers series.
Peaceable Stories has already proven successful. As readers of this newsletter may recall from the preceding issue, Peaceable Stories encourages Maine’s youngest children to talk about and reflect on the possibility of peace within themselves, their families, their classrooms, and their communities. Since 2006, Peaceable Stories has reached over 325 educators (who, in turn, serve over 3,000 children) with trainings that include themed book collections and an Activity & Resource Guide. Educators learn how to use the books to foster early literacy skills while also cultivating emotional literacy—the ability to recognize and name feelings, and practice empathy—among the children in their care. Conversations with children about the themes of these books and activities are opportunities to promote words, rather than fists, teeth, and nails, as tools for resolving conflicts.

The grant from Jane’s Trust has already enabled Born to Read to take the Peaceable Stories initiative to domestic violence agencies. Building on the success of Peaceable Stories, the grant also allows the Council to extend the discussion of conflict to the audience served by New Books, New Readers.

Started in 1993, New Books, New Readers uses the traditional humanities model of reading and discussion to engage low-literacy adults in the pleasure of reading and the power of ideas. Participants come to New Books, New Readers from a myriad of complex circumstances. Many are refugees, others are or have been incarcerated; the challenges they face are magnified by the isolation of illiteracy. New Books, New Readers gives participants a voice and a forum to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. For people who may have never been asked what they think, this experience is truly empowering. Julia Walkling, Program Director for New Books, New Readers, explains that the program keeps its reading and discussion series relevant by choosing themes that are key to life issues. Unfortunately, conflict and violence are life issues that surface daily for many people.

New Books, New Readers staff have thoroughly reviewed the best children’s literature on the theme of conflict and selected books for the two new series (see right). Frequently, when people are asked to consider the concept of conflict, they immediately think of fighting between people, or war between countries. When asked about resolution, they assume it entails one side winning and the other losing. The books in the New Books, New Readers series challenge participants to stretch and reconsider these preconceptions.

In The First Feud Between the Mountain and the Sea by Maine author Lynn Plourde, a power struggle between the anthropomorphized elements of land and water results in the destruction of the earth. Only when the combatants witness the devastation can they get beyond their hunger for power and arrive at understanding. But characters who lack power are sometimes forced simply to cope with a situation they can’t change. In Cheryl Savageau’s Muskrat Will Be Swimming, the young Native American protagonist overcomes the discrimination she encounters at school by realizing that she values the very things that set her apart, and that she doesn’t need her tormenters to see her point of view.

These powerful stories and discussions will allow participants to learn to read proficiently, have confidence in their interpretations and ideas, and discuss their feelings in a thoughtful way. Copies of all of the books will be given to the participants to take home so that they can reread and share them.

Jane’s Trust was founded in 2002 through the beneficence of Jane B. Cook. In addition to the environment, health and welfare, and arts and culture, the

...the program keeps its reading and discussion series relevant by choosing themes that are key to life issues.
trustees also have an interest in increasing access to educational opportunities, especially for underserved populations and nontraditional students. Through the work of New Books, New Readers, and Born to Read, the Council is not only reaching these populations with unique educational opportunities, but also empowering them to overcome significant challenges and shape a new, more rewarding direction for themselves, their families, and their communities.

BOOK LIST: RESOLVING CONFLICT

For discussion: Is conflict part of human nature? Can or should we avoid it? How do our own inner conflicts contribute to conflict with others? What escalates conflict? What part does power play in creating and resolving conflict?

SESSION 1: WHY FIGHT?

The Upstairs Cat
by Karla Kuskin & Howard Fine (Illustrator)

The First Feud Between the Mountain and the Sea
by Lynn Plourde & Jim Sollers (Illustrator)

Sami and the Time of the Troubles
by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland & Ted Lewin (Illustrator)

SESSION 2: MY WAY OR YOURS?

It’s Mine! by Leo Lionni

Smoky Night
by Eve Bunting & David Diaz (Illustrator)

The War with Grandpa by Robert Kimmel Smith & Richard Lauter (Illustrator)

SESSION 3: IS IT FAIR?

The Lion’s Share: A Somali Folktale
by Said Salah Ahmed & Kelly Dupre (Illustrator)

Beautiful Warrior: The Legend of the Nun’s Kung Fu
by Emily Arnold McCully

The Trail of Tears by Joseph Bruchac & Diana Magnuson (Illustrator)

BOOK LIST: CONFLICT

For discussion: What happens when a conflict can’t be resolved? What do people need to bring to the table for getting along peacefully? Is conflict necessary for growth? Do we learn from it? What happens when there’s an unfair resolution?

SESSION 1: FINDING YOUR OWN WAY

When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry...
by Molly Bang

Muskat Will Be Swimming
by Cheryl Savageau & Robert Hynes (Illustrator)

Rickshaw Girl
by Mitali Perkins & Jamie Hogan (Illustrator)

SESSION 2: TALKING IT THROUGH

Hey, Little Ant by Phillip and Hannah Hoose & Debbie Tilley (Illustrator)

Fatima by Frederick Lipp & Margaret Sanfilippo Lindmark (Illustrator)

Eagle Song by Joseph Bruchac & Dan Andreasen (Illustrator)

SESSION 3: GETTING HELP

The Hunterman & the Crocodile: A West African Folktale by Baba Wagué Diakité

Mr. Lincoln’s Way by Patricia Polacco

Circle of Gold by Candy Dawson Boyd
EIGHT years ago, the Maine Humanities Council and the Maine Department of Corrections wondered what it would take to get probationers to participate in reading and discussion groups. The Associate Commissioner for Adult Community Corrections, Nancy Bouchard, thought she could convince some probation officers (POs) to send their probationers to the groups if the Council could provide facilitators and books for each participant to keep. These unlikely partners spent months in planning meetings, then signed a contract and launched Stories for Life.

The program was active for several years, but it was a tough sell. Probationers and officers were accustomed to a strictly hierarchical system; gathering around a table to talk about a short story put them on the same level. “I’ve never had POs talk to me that way before,” one participant commented, “like a person.” Some POs seemed threatened by this challenge to their authority; others just had a hard time seeing the reading groups, with their free cookies and lofty ideas, as a tool for rehabilitation. As Stories for Life Program Director Julia Walkling points out, “books and book discussion differ from the other, more directive tools in the probation officer’s toolbox.” So the program faded away.

Among the POs who were most enthusiastic about Stories for Life were Bud Hall and John Lorenzen, who coordinated groups in two different parts of the state. These days, Bud and John are both based in Augusta, where they share an office, a coffee pot, and a nagging frustration with the cycle—probation, violation, imprisonment—that ensnares many criminal offenders. They are willing to entertain any idea or initiative that might break that cycle, whether or not it’s within the purview of traditional correctional theory. So last spring, they hatched a plan to bring Stories for Life back to life, with the new name Outside the Box.

The Council was not asked to offer financial support at the time; instead, John and Bud convinced their supervisor to pay for books with Department funds, and decided they could serve as discussion facilitators. They used correctional jargon—cognitive skills training, stage of change assessment—to help POs understand that the program could be both a sanction and an opportunity for their probationers. And so a group was cobbled together, encompassing everyone from graduate-degree holders to those at a fourth-grade reading level.

The sixth 10-week series of Outside the Box convenes this fall. It includes some participants from that original group who have come back for all but a handful of meetings, even after serving out the terms of their probation. They’ve read Carver’s Cathedral, Steinbeck’s The Long Valley, Salinger’s Nine Stories. It’s no accident that these are gritty, plot-driven collections of realistic short fiction. The probationers are much more interested in talking about what happens in a story than in dissecting descriptive passages or analyzing the author’s style. That suits Bud and John just fine. They’re quick
…“books and book discussion differ from the other, more directive tools in the probation officer’s toolbox.”

to point out that they are not literary scholars. They want to provoke discussion about the conflicts between characters, or the conflicts within, that lead to good or bad decisions. They ask questions like “where did he mess up?” “what was he thinking?” “what would you do in that situation?” then sit back and wait for the insightful answers that never fail to come.

As newly minted discussion facilitators, John and Bud have been resourceful in borrowing strategies from experts. Each Outside the Box session begins with two brief discussions, prompted first by a photograph, then by a single word. These discussions give the less proficient readers, some of whom rely on their wives or girlfriends to read to them, a chance to participate. They also demonstrate that everyone can look at the same picture and see different things, or use the same word with different meanings in mind. The photograph idea comes from Jeff Aronson, the original facilitator for Stories for Life (and many other Council programs). The inspiration to discuss a word came from a conference for “Changing Lives Through Literature,”
another literature program for correctional systems, established in Massachusetts in 1993 and now operating in eight states and the UK.

At the first meeting of the current series, discussion of the word “culture” ranged from the tongue-in-cheek “it’s a sample of bacteria that you put on a slide” to the languages spoken in one of Augusta’s subsidized housing developments to conservative commentator Michael Savage’s slogan, “Borders – Language – Culture.” Discussion of the story for this session, Salinger’s “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” (1948), was equally wide-ranging. There were attempts to diagnosis the main character, Seymour Glass. The consensus is that “he’s got post-traumatic stress—or whatever they called it back then, shell shock.” At this, the veterans in the group offered their perspective on what discharge might have meant for Seymour.

Do his background and his condition justify his behavior? Just how badly does he behave, anyway? To what extent are his actions premeditated? What was he thinking?

The very least that can be said for Outside the Box is that for the ninety minutes of each group meeting, these probationers are interacting with peers in a structured activity. John and Bud acknowledge that for some, the group is just a way to kill time. But for others, the books are beacons. One left his copy of The Long Valley at a truck stop in South Carolina and paid to replace it, not because he had to, but because he wanted to finish the story he was reading, knowing that his opinions about it would be heard. For ninety minutes, he would be a person, not a probationer; in thrall to a story, not a sentence.

Stories for Life, as Outside the Box shows, has great potential for people within the correctional system. For more information on Stories for Life, contact Program Director Julia Walkling. To support this program, contact Development Director Diane Magras.

“Between Right and Wrong,” continued from page 7

SUPPORTING A GIRLS’ POINT OF VIEW

BY BRITA ZITIN

“SUPPORTING A GIRLS’ POINT OF VIEW” BY BRITA ZITIN

“SUPPORTING A GIRLS’ POINT OF VIEW” BY BRITA ZITIN
There’s no mistaking this scene for a high school English class. The Camden Hills Regional High School students gathered on this summer Sunday wear shorts and tank tops; one shields her face from the sun with a straw hat. In lieu of a chalkboard, a lake sparkles behind them. The sticky remnants of make-your-own sundaes share space on the picnic table with hardcover books, ice cream pooling dangerously close to the dust jackets. Lacrosse season is over, curtains have fallen on school plays and concerts, but the Girls’ Point of View book club is the one “extracurricular” these students can’t bear to leave behind. That stands to reason: it’s the only one that has blurred the line between their classrooms and their lives.

“I wonder if Dessen had a publisher breathing down her neck,” says Sarah, “because the whole thing seemed kind of like a rough draft.” Anna agrees: “It read like a really long movie trailer, with tiny clips of really good things spliced together.” The girls know that author Sarah Dessen’s books are marketed heavily to their cohort, and they’re not duped by the “corny symbolism” of her plots. Clearly, her work is a guilty pleasure compared with some of the other books they’ve read together—Dorothy Allison’s Bastard Out of Carolina, historical fiction like Jennifer Donnelly’s A Northern Light—but they confess to liking it anyway. “She always works in really deep stuff that you never would have thought about otherwise,” McKenzie muses.

The first Girls’ Point of View book club for high school girls was founded on the island of Vinalhaven in 2000. School librarian Sue Dempster found herself fielding requests from female students for books selected by Oprah for her TV book club. Dempster thought what they might really be after was not the books so much as the experience of reading them with other girls and women.

Her suspicion proved correct; in that first year, nearly every high school girl on the island, along with several teachers and staff members, joined the club. “The girls connected the characters’ struggles to their own lives,” says Dempster, “which gave them a safe way to analyze issues and get feedback.”

In 2005, the Camden-based nonprofit Mainely Girls applied for a grant from the Maine Humanities Council to build on the Vinalhaven model and establish Girls’ Point of View book clubs across Maine. By creating a lending library to offset the cost of books, Mainely Girls was able to launch new clubs in seven midcoast towns by 2006. Last year, there were 25 clubs operating in high schools from Caribou to Madison to Machias. Each club selects from a catalog of 40 titles, compiled by girls with input from facilitators, and Mainely Girls sends copies from the central library. The high school girls read both fiction and nonfiction books that depict resourceful female characters developing self-respect and autonomy—in sharp contrast to the girls they’re used to seeing on TV and in the movies.

Adolescent girls seem to spend plenty of time chatting amongst themselves about their personal lives, but when it comes to seeking guidance from adults, they’re much more secretive. Reading and discussing literature gives them the distance and perspective they need to truly reflect on the challenges they face, and seek guidance without directly

“She always works in really deep stuff that you never would have thought about otherwise,” McKenzie muses.
Mainely Girls participants, Washburn.

asking for help. The adult women who facilitate the groups (teachers, school nurses, active community members) absorb their comments without judging or lecturing. (When a story addresses a particularly sensitive issue such as drinking or self-injury, facilitators often invite a professional counselor to join the discussion.)

Club membership also helps girls transcend the vicious social hierarchies that have been documented in books like Odd Girl Out by Rachel Simmons and Queen Bees and Wannabees by Rosalind Wiseman, and immortalized in movies like "Mean Girls." Friendships are formed in clubs between girls who might not have otherwise acknowledged one another in the halls at school. Also (perhaps surprisingly), clubs attract proficient readers and struggling students alike. The latter are motivated by the schedule of club meetings to read challenging books quickly, but carefully so they can contribute to discussions. One student from Presque Isle wrote, "I am not as shy as I was before I took part in the club, because it taught me that my opinion is not dumb and my voice is actually being heard."

Some book clubs have enjoyed visits from special guests, including authors like Cynthia Lord. First Lady Karen Baldacci joined Lawrence High School for a discussion of Sue Mayfield’s Drowning Anna. “I found it interesting to hear the girls’ points of view, opinions, and how they expressed their feelings,” said the First Lady. “Book clubs are important to discuss issues and conflicts, explore ideas and solutions. I wish all Maine students could participate in a book club on a regular basis.”

She may yet get her wish. With additional support from the Council, Mainely Girls staff has responded to demand from students, teachers, and parents to expand the Girls’ Point of View book clubs to younger students. In 2007, there were 32 groups drawing on the lending library of titles selected especially for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders; starting this fall, the first clubs for fourth and fifth graders will be established. Popular selections for this age group include Newbery Award-winner Criss Cross by Lynne Rae Perkins and Newbery honor book Rules by Maine author Cynthia Lord. And although Mainely Girls cannot directly support them, book clubs for boys are also springing up around the state. On Vinalhaven, Sue Dempster has organized “Boys, Books, and Bagels” breakfast meetings led by local men. As evidence emerges about the social and academic vulnerabilities of boys, more boys’ clubs may yet develop. When that time comes, they’ll be able to follow the precedent set by Girls’ Point of View.

“…it taught me that my opinion is not dumb and my voice is actually being heard.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADES FOUR &amp; FIVE</th>
<th>MIDDLE SCHOOL</th>
<th>HIGH SCHOOL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rickshaw Girl</strong> by Mitali Perkins</td>
<td><strong>Boy2Girl</strong> by Terence Blacker</td>
<td><strong>Bastard Out of Carolina</strong> by Dorothy Allison</td>
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<td>Naima is ten years old, but ambitious. She wants to help support her poor Bangladeshi family, so she offers herself, disguised as a boy, for painting traditional patterns on rickshaws.</td>
<td>Sam is 13 when his mother dies and he must leave California to live in England with relatives. His life has changed dramatically, and so he accepts a dare from his cousin to enter his new English school as a girl. Sam(antha) teaches everyone a lesson about stereotypical identities.</td>
<td>Bone lives with her mother in Greenville County, South Carolina—a rural, wild place. She can see everything and see through anyone, but that doesn’t help her with her stepfather, Daddy Glen, who calls Bone “cold as death, mean as a snake, and twice as twisty.”</td>
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<td><strong>Roxie and the Holligans</strong> by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor</td>
<td><strong>Criss Cross</strong> by Lynne Rae Perkins</td>
<td><strong>Drowning Anna</strong> by Sue Mayfield</td>
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<td>Nine-year-old Roxie Warbler is a master at outdoor survival skills, but she doesn’t know how to master Helvetia’s Holligans, which have targeted her for the year as the subject for their torments. Through a series of adventures, Rosie and the Holligans find themselves stranded on an island. Here, Rosie suddenly finds herself among frightened bullies, the only one who knows what to do.</td>
<td>A group of 14-year-old friends is at a crossroads, making decisions that seem to send each along a different path. The stories explore children searching for themselves as they enter adulthood.</td>
<td>Anna Goldsmith comes to a city from a small town, with both an accent and almost-perfect grades. Hayley Parkin, the most popular girl in school, befriends her; but then begins a slow game of torture that everyone has seen before. The only difference this time is Anna’s response.</td>
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<td><strong>Each Little Bird that Sings</strong> by Deborah Wiles</td>
<td><strong>Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy</strong> by Gary Schmidt</td>
<td><strong>The First Part Last</strong> by Angela Johnson</td>
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<td>The Snowberger family runs a funeral parlor in Mississippi, but that doesn’t prepare 10-year-old Comfort when her 94-year-old great-great-aunt Florentine Snowberger dies in a vegetable garden.</td>
<td>It is 1912 and Turner Buckminster is immediately at odds with the residents of Phippsburg, Maine, after he moves there. He meets Lizzie Bright Griffin, who lives on Malaga Island, and soon is drawn up into the struggle that threatens Lizzie’s very home.</td>
<td>Bobby learns on his 16th birthday that his girlfriend Nia is pregnant. Suddenly, his free and easy urban life changes. He trades parties for visits to Nia’s obstetrician. Both face difficult decisions when a social worker recommends they put the baby up for adoption in order to return to a normal life.</td>
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<td><strong>Ida B…and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (possibly) Save the World</strong> by Katherine Hannigan</td>
<td><strong>Perfect</strong> by Natasha Friend</td>
<td><strong>Looking for Alaska</strong> by John Green</td>
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<td>Ida B is a homeschooled only child who has always used her creative mind to find pleasure in life and to solve problems. Her life becomes suddenly frustrating and complex when her mother develops cancer and Ida B must go to public school.</td>
<td>Isabelle Lee has an eating disorder, and when this is discovered by her little sister, she is forced to attend a group. There she makes her own discoveries about peers and her world in which all that matters is appearances.</td>
<td>Miles Halter, an unconventional Florida teenager, trades home for a boarding school in Alabama and a chance to explore the “Great Perhaps:”</td>
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<td><strong>The Canada Geese Quilt</strong> by Natalie Kinsey-Warnock</td>
<td><strong>Rules</strong> by Cynthia Lord</td>
<td><strong>The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things</strong> by Carolyn Mackler</td>
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<td>Ariel is worried about the new baby soon to arrive on the Vermont farm shared by her parents and her grandmother, but when her grandmother suffers a stroke, Ariel’s worries shift. It is when her grandmother refuses to try to recover that Ariel sees the new baby as an opportunity to help re-engage her grandmother in life.</td>
<td>Even though 12-year-old Catherine loves her younger brother David, who has autism, his behavior causes her such embarrassment that she forces him to obey certain rules. Then Catherine meets Jason, a nonverbal paraplegic who uses pictures to communicate, and she realizes there is a wide range of “normal.”</td>
<td>Fifteen-year-old Virginia struggles to fit in with a family who all seem smart, thin, and beautiful.</td>
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<td><strong>Bridge to Terabithia</strong> by Katherine Patterson</td>
<td><strong>Tending to Grace</strong> by Kimberly Fusco</td>
<td><strong>Secret Life of Bees</strong> by Sue Monk Kidd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jess is the fastest runner he knows; until he meets a tomboy named Leslie. He discovers that there’s nothing wrong with being second to a girl in running, and that imagination has a power above all else.</td>
<td>Cornelia Thornhill is widely seen to be antisocial and even slow, so no one seems to mind much when her mother takes her out of school and drops her off with her great-aunt Agatha while she heads out west with her boyfriend. Cornelia is soon ready to run away, but she begins to realize how much she and her misunderstood aunt, called the “Crow Lady,” have in common.</td>
<td>Lily Owens and her beloved black nanny Rosaleen escape Lily’s abusive father and an intolerant community for Tiburon, South Carolina (which was scrawled on the back of a photo left by Lily’s dead mother). There they meet the beekeeping sisters, May, June, and August, who help Lily face the tragic events of her past.</td>
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<td><strong>Number the Stars</strong> by Lois Lowry</td>
<td><strong>The Whistle Rider</strong> by Witi Ihimaera</td>
<td><strong>Northern Light</strong> by Jennifer Donnelly</td>
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<td>This fictionalized true story relates the experience of one Danish girl as people of Denmark sought to save 7,000 Jews from the death camps in 1943 by smuggling them to Sweden. Told from the perspective of Annemarie Johanssensen, whose family helps best friend Ellen Rosen and her family escape.</td>
<td>The male heir always inherits the title of “chief” in New Zealand’s Maori Tribe, but eight-year-old Kahu attempts to change this tradition, struggling with her great-grandfather’s will.</td>
<td>Sixteen-year-old Mattie is determined to do something different. It is 1906, and she wants to attend college and be a writer. Her father and fiancé are against the plan. When Mattie begins work at a summer inn, a murder occurs, and Mattie solves a mystery.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Each Little Bird that Sings</strong> by Deborah Wiles</td>
<td><strong>Looking for Alaska</strong> by John Green</td>
<td>Books which have received awards</td>
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Ways of the Woods
$4,000: The Northern Forest Center has spent the better part of a decade developing and implementing its Ways of the Woods: People and the Land in the Northern Forest exhibit. This mobile museum display is housed in an 18-wheel tractor trailer, allowing it to travel to under-served rural communities in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York. The display, originally built with support from the NEH, uses the humanities to help people appreciate the past, understand the present, and plan for the future of the Maine Woods and broader Northern Forest region. The organization notes that “the Northern Forest has been a melting pot of philosophies and attitudes toward the natural world. Without imposing value judgments, Ways of the Woods explores and contrasts all these attitudes.” In 2008, the bus stopped at five events in Maine: Canoe Hullaballoo in Old Town, the Acadian Festival in Madawaska, the Houlton Fair, Forest Heritage Days in Greenville, and the Fryeburg Fair. For a journal documenting the truck’s travels, please visit www.northernforest.org.

Some Homes
$1,000: The goal of “Some Homes,” the 2008 summer exhibit at the L.C. Bates Museum in Hinckley, is to stimulate thinking about the meaning of Home through discussion and interpretation of contemporary art and historical context on the experience of Home, specifically Maine homes and the related philosophy of home at Good Will–Hinckley. Accompanying events included a lecture by Earle Shettleworth on domestic architecture in Maine, a panel with artists and representatives from Waterville Main Street and the Margaret Chase Smith Library, and a film screening at Railroad Square Cinema.

Maine Folk Art Symposium
$1,000: The capstone event in the statewide Maine Folk Art Trail project was a symposium on Maine Folk Art that brought nationally-known scholars to engage the public in an exploration of the place of folk art in Maine history and culture. The symposium took place in September at Bates College; proceedings were captured on video for future reference. Speakers covered such topics as scrimshaw, quilts, redware, and hooked rugs. For more information on the Maine Folk Art Trail and its participating institutions, please visit www.mainefolkarttrail.org.

Maine Stories of Place
$4,000: The Maine Folklife Center is immersed in a Story Bank project on Maine’s sense of place, inspired in part by the “Charting Maine’s Future” report from the Brookings Institute. The project engages storytellers, writers, and trained community fieldworkers in the tradition of place-based narratives that build on local and regional identity. Project staff are also interested in engaging the general public, and planned a presence at the 2008 American Folk Festival where folklorists Jo Radner, Peggy Yocom, and Karen Miller facilitated storytelling at the Story Bank Narrative Stage on the Bangor Waterfront. Nearby, visitors were invited to record their own stories of place in a story-collating booth (actually an RV) run by producer Rob Rosenthal. The stories collected at the folk festival will be preserved at the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History, edited for radio broadcast, and transcribed for publication in Northeast Folklore. After its debut in August, the Story Bank RV moved on to other venues, such as the 2008 Common Ground Fair. For information on the Story Bank project, please call the Maine Folklife Center at (207) 581-1891 or visit www.umaine.edu/folklife.

America’s Ten Greatest Presidents
$300: In the summer of 2008, under the leadership of scholar Don Lord, a group of Damariscotta citizens met weekly at the Skidompha Library to discuss some timely questions: what makes a great president? Have the criteria for greatness changed over time, or just the perspectives of the historians? In evaluating greatness, how important are the unique obstructions or opportunities afforded by the historical moment? Can a really average person make a great president? What qualities does a bad president lack? By studying various lists of the greatest presidents based on “yardsticks” developed by historians such as Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., and Thomas A. Bailey, the group developed criteria for its own list of presidential greatness. Similar groups met in public libraries in Waldoboro and Rockland.

Above: Bruce Habowski’s oil painting, “15 Degrees,” was completed in the winter of 2008 and almost immediately displayed as part of the “Some Homes” exhibition at the L.C. Bates Museum in Hinckley. PHOTO: BRUCE HABOWSKI

DAMARISCOTTA

LEWISTON

HINCKLEY

ORONO

Clockwise: The Northern Forest Center’s Ways of the Woods exhibit is housed in this 18-wheel tractor trailer. | A grandfather and his grandsons tour the exhibit during its visit to Jackman in September 2006. | Young visitors to the exhibit contribute their ideas during the truck’s inaugural stop in Medway in 2006. PHOTOS: NORTHERN FOREST CENTER
For the Love of Peaks
$1,000: Fran Houston, a photographer and writer who moved to Peaks Island in 2003, attended an oral history workshop funded by the Maine Humanities Council in December 2007. Inspired by what she learned, she interviewed many older Peaks residents about their memories and stories from childhood. Her work came together in “For the Love of Peaks,” an exhibit of black and white portraits and writings at the Gem Gallery on Peaks Island. The exhibit opened on June 6, 2008, and ran for two weeks.

Above: Fran Houston’s portrait of Annie Romanyshyn; Annie’s stories of her homes on Peaks were lovingly and humorously described. PHOTO: FRAN HOUSTON

New Orleans: Culture & Crisis
$1,000: The ninth annual Deer Isle Jazz Festival (a collaboration between Opera House Arts at the Stonington Opera House and Haystack Mountain School of Crafts) examined the impact of the improvisational creative tradition on community development. Mardi Gras Indian art and music have been central to the post-Katrina reconstruction in New Orleans. The 2008 festival explored how these traditions have been used in a time of crisis, and how the unique cultural heritage of Downeast Maine might be similarly used for community empowerment. In addition to concerts, festival events included a school-based residency program with The Hot 8, a lecture by visiting artist and Mardi Gras Indian scholar Donald Harrison, a town hall discussion and craft demonstration, a film screening and discussion of “All on a Mardi Gras Day,” a multimedia presentation by Katrina Media Fellow Larry Blumenfeld, and a traditional New Orleans Second Line community parade in Stonington.

Above: Community members from throughout the Down East area participating in a free master class with New Orleans’ Own Hot 8 Brass Band on Saturday, July 26, 2008, as part of the 8th Annual Deer Isle Jazz Festival: New Orleans—Culture, Crisis, and Community. PHOTO: LINDA NELSON

André Kertész: On Reading
$4,000: André Kertész was a leading photographer of the 20th century. “On Reading,” the exhibition of his work that appears at the Portland Museum of Art August 30 through November 16, 2008, explores the subject of reading as a basic human endeavor. A full slate of educational programs, including a teacher workshop on September 17 and the October launch of a blog about reading, complements the exhibit and coincides with National Book Month. For details, please visit www.portlandmuseum.org.

The Cumberland and Oxford Canal Interpretive Project
$5,000: Part of the historic Cumberland & Oxford Canal runs alongside a popular walking trail within an 85-acre nature sanctuary in the Stroudwater section of Portland. Portland Trails, a nonprofit land trust and trail-building organization, acquired the Fore River Sanctuary from Maine Audubon in 2007. With input from scholars, Portland Trails will create educational and interpretive signage for two locations along its Fore River trail, overlooking important canal sites. An orientation map will show the entire route of the canal, indicating the locations of other sites and restorations that people can visit. Signs and online information will sketch the history of the canal, describe canal-era commerce, explain canal engineering, and list references to canals in literature. This project takes inspiration from large-scale preservation projects around the Illinois & Michigan Canal and the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal. To learn more, please contact Portland Trails at (207) 775-2411, or visit www.trails.org.

Peter Cook: Hands On PAH!
$1,000: Nationally renowned deaf storyteller Peter Cook visited Maine with his interpreter, Keith Wann, in April, 2008. Cook gave a storytelling performance and a workshop on ASL storytelling and visual communication in the Nordica Auditorium at the University of Maine in Farmington. His appearance was part of the Wilton Free Public Library’s Hands On PAH! initiative, intended to make the library more accessible to the local and larger deaf community through collection development, technical services, and programming.

Right: Deaf artist Peter Cook giving a workshop and storytelling performance at the University of Maine in Farmington, April 2008. PHOTO: DCC INTERPRETER SERVICE

SELECTED GRANTS:
SPRING & SUMMER 2008

Projects funded by the Council and the Maine Arts Commission through a joint Arts and Humanities grant program.
Power and Architecture in Rome: Augustus to Mussolini
A Scholar-Led Tour March 20 – 28, 2009

Travel to Italy with the Maine Humanities Council and Peter Aicher, Professor of Classics at the University of Southern Maine, to study how past leaders used Rome’s urban design to project their political ambitions and cultural values of the period.

Professor Aicher designed this ten-day tour to be both intimate and active. It will focus on three historical moments that profoundly affected the shape of the city today: imperial rule under Augustus, papal rule during the building of St. Peter’s Basilica, and Fascist rule under Mussolini. Participants will discover how the sophisticated language of the Romans’ architectural and urban design gives voice to political power and cultural values.

This will be a pedestrian-centered tour with considerable walking over uneven ground. The trip is limited to 20 participants. Individual places cost $4,030 for double occupancy and $4,770 for single occupancy (includes a $500 tax-deductible contribution to the Maine Humanities Council). Prices are contingent upon 20 tour members, fuel, government tax, and exchange fluctuations. Surcharges may apply. The trip package includes non-stop, round-trip air transportation from Boston to Rome; seven nights at a hotel with breakfast daily; four group lunches and three group dinners; and the scholar-led tour.

For more information, contact Diane Magras at the Council: (207) 773-5051.

To book your place (final payment due October 30, 2008), contact Dana Widen at Hewins Travel: (800) 370-0888 x1207.