



Connections to Literacy and the World

by Terry Farish
Connections Coordinator,
NH Humanities Council

On an icy-cold Tuesday morning, a group of students including two laid-off construction workers shivered into Susannah Starr's English language class at the Manchester Latin American Center. It's a clapboard house downtown on Maple Street. They gathered around a large table, still in layers of clothes, and Susannah passed out *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco, the last book in the *Connections* reading and discussion series. Sandra LeBeau, the Humanities Council facilitator, brought pirozhkis, Russian dumplings, to help students explore Polacco's story of Russian immigrants to the U.S.

When Susannah, Sandra, and I set the program up, Susannah said she had five to six students. Their ages were from 19 to 60. The Center was struggling, she said, and their numbers were down, and maybe *Connections* could help. She said her students were mostly from Central America – El Salvador and Guatemala – but also from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Mexico. Susannah herself is from Paraguay.

The group first met in December and read *Celia Cruz, Queen of Salsa* by Veronica Chambers. Susannah and Sandra had sent out invitations, and nine students celebrated stories and memories of Celia Cruz and her salsa music. They were fascinated with the illustrations and the story of a girl

growing up in Havana who was so poor her first shoes were given to her as payment for a song she sang. They were perplexed when Sandra said they could keep the book. Then they were astounded.

"They loved the books," Sandra said. "They loved being able to take them home to share with their children."

This spring, the New Hampshire Humanities Council is running nine series of *Connections* book groups, a scholar-led reading and discussion program for adults learning English by reading the best of children's literature. The series of four discussions supports ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes with immigrants from many countries. It also supports adult and family literacy programs for natives of New Hampshire such as one that Janis Minshull of the Conway Public Library is hosting, bringing together Head Start parents, GED students, and their children.

Connections is not new. Christy Sarles directed the program in the 1990s through the New Hampshire State Library, supported by Becky Albert, who was the State Library Literacy Coordinator. Libraries across the state hosted *Connections* discussions. Initially the program was matched with students and tutors in the Adult Tutorial Program. And the original *Connections* participants were native English speakers as opposed to the new Americans who now make up about a third of adult

students of English in New Hampshire according to the NH Department of Education.

Today the *Connections* program has moved from the State Library to the Humanities Council and I came to coordinate the program in 2008. We have trained seventeen new facilitators with the goal of again making *Connections* available to adults learning English anywhere in the state, through classes, Adult Learner Services programs, and public library-sponsored literacy programs.

The Humanities Council is launching a new three-year initiative, "Fences and Neighbors: New Hampshire's Immigration Stories." *Connections* is one of the core components of "Fences and Neighbors" and, therefore, our first focus as we expand *Connections* has been in cities

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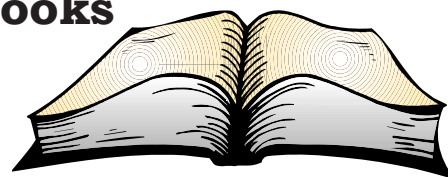
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New Hampshire Books

By Donna Gilbreth



Hirshberg, Gary. *Stirring It Up: How to Make Money and Save the World*. (New York: Hyperion, 2008)

Gary Hirshberg is the CEO (he prefers CE-Yo) of Stonyfield Farm, an organic yogurt maker headquartered in New Hampshire. He has written a book that is not so much biography or corporate history, but a manifesto on creating a business that tries not to harm the environment, yet is still commercially successful. Hirshberg has worked for the last 30 years or so to make Stonyfield Farm a manufacturer with a conscience. His book, *Stirring It Up: How to Make Money and Save the World*, describes how he constantly strives to reduce waste and energy usage at his company, in the hopes of lessening their harmful impact on our shared environment. He also gives many examples of other companies, like Timberland, Patagonia, Clif Bar and several others, that work in various ways to be organic or reduce their carbon footprint.

Hirshberg's goal (in addition to making a good product and growing a successful company) is to prove, through his company practices, that sustainability can pay off for businesses. Proving that a company can make choices in running a company that might cost more but better protect the environment, yet still be profitable, is the story of Stonyfield Farm, and the crux of his book.

Hirshberg is the son and grandson of New Hampshire owners of a shoe factory. In their heyday, and that of so many other factories in New Hampshire, pollution of the air, ground and water was an unfortunate fact of life. Residents of the many New Hampshire mill towns breathed polluted air and could not swim in the industrial waste-filled streams near their homes. Hirshberg does not want his company to be like that, and he has taken many steps to reduce pollution from his company's operations.

Stonyfield Farm began in 1982 as a two-person operation (with co-founder Samuel Kaymen) making a rich yogurt. In the beginning they struggled to survive; one partner would stay at the farm milking the cows that day while the other would visit several grocery stores demonstrating their product to shoppers. Their business slowly grew: "By 1984, our herd had grown to nineteen cows. Every morning and evening, Samuel went next door and hooked up our brown-eyed Jersey cows to electric milking machines. They gave enough milk to produce 350 cases of yogurt a week." After one eventful evening when the electricity went out, they promptly sold their cows and made arrangements to buy milk from approved farmers. Along the way the company has made several decisions to create an ecologically sound business. To reduce waste they studied the issue and decided to eliminate the plastic lid and inner seal found on many yogurt containers, just using a foil seal. The reduced packaging helps our overloaded landfills, and also helped save the company money, a win/win situation. They also tackled the problem of waste produced in the yogurt manufacturing process. As the author states:

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“Just one more reason why something wonderful is happening in Warner”
- Jim Mitchell (March 17, 1950 – June 4, 2008)

How a Little Bookstore Can Make a Difference

by Katharine Mitchell Nevins

It is wonderful that The Center for the Book is again planning to be part of The Big Read from the National Endowment for the Arts. As part of the Endowment’s effort to restore the joy of reading to the center of American culture, the Center has wisely chosen to focus this time on Harper Lee’s masterpiece *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

When I lost my brother in June, I knew immediately that this favorite was the book that most spoke to everyday kindnesses, loss, and the nurturing, restorative power of a community. We, at MainStreet BookEnds, are honored to partner our bookstore’s work with the Center for the Book at the New Hampshire State Library to promote and discuss this book in our part of New Hampshire.

We opened MainStreet BookEnds 10 years ago, during the annual Warner Fall Foliage Festival, and the community immediately responded by supporting us and making the bookstore and attached gallery the center for much of the town’s activity.

This year’s Town Report for Warner writes: “Just one more reason why something wonderful is happening in

Warner’ is the phrase from Jim Mitchell, as he tirelessly promoted the virtues of life in our Town. Jim left an indelible mark in creating, along with his sister and brother-in-law, MainStreet BookEnds of Warner in 1998. The bookstore became the focal point and gathering place for the town. Here he coordinated over 300 events a year, including concerts, lectures, classes, story hours and the meeting of presidential primary candidates. He was a former director of the Warner Fall Foliage Festival, served on numerous town committees, and was named Warner’s “Citizen of the Year” in 2004. Jim had influence on people far from Warner, but he most loved to promote and encourage all artists, writers, musicians and children who live here. To help promote all things cultural and educational in Warner, he created the non-profit MainStreet Warner, Inc. For his support of the children and education, The Simonds Elementary School named their library after him. To honor Jim’s spirit and life work, his dream for a community park between the bookstore and the Pillsbury Free Library is currently coming to fruition, his gift to the town he so loved, through MainStreet Warner, Inc.”

For Jim, this was always about so much more than selling books. It was about helping all of us to recog-

nize our uniqueness and the amazing talents and inspirations right around us. While the bookstore grew and brought in children’s toys and games, Jim nurtured Warner’s community spirit by spotlighting our writers, artists, historians, and musicians.

Through an annual grant from The Warner Fall Foliage Festival, he promoted literacy in our elementary school by bringing in famous and inspiring writers and artists, and making sure each child received their own autographed book. He was most proud of the bookstore’s many awards and distinctions, including being named a destination place by *Yankee Magazine*.

He created a bookstore with a personality that put everyone at ease, always feeling welcome, usually laughing a lot, and with random announcements of “free balloon hour” for everyone. While the bookstore was the center, he held court as the town’s ambassador for literacy and the arts. It is no wonder that for several months after his death the community continued to gather here, helping to sell books and providing support to us and each other, making sure that the doors never closed and his spirit remained.

As the bookstore rebounds and continues, so does the community spirit that Jim brought to us and taught us. The non-profit that he founded now supports an annual literacy grant for the town’s children, an annual scholarship for high school seniors headed to college, and an annual book award to one boy and girl from Simonds Elementary School’s 5th grade, all in his name. Recipients of these awards each receive a hardbound copy of



<http://www.mainstreetbookends.com/>

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Connections

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where the vast majority of recent immigrants and refugees live.

“Fences and Neighbors” aims to increase understanding of immigration history in New Hampshire, of current laws and issues, and of the stories and experiences of immigrants and refugees; to create room for civic reflection for those wrestling with contemporary immigration issues; and to break down cultural barriers. Activities include forums, oral history projects organized by the UNH Center for the Humanities, grants for community projects, and *Connections* reading and discussion programs.

The English language, according to professionals in fields from health care providers to police officers, is the single greatest obstacle to resettlement for immigrants and refugees in their new American homes.

The goal of *Connections* is to support existing ESOL programs as they teach necessary language skills. The way *Connections* works is best described by Johanna Young who teaches ESOL in the Lutheran Social Services refugee program in Concord and who has hosted a *Connections* series. She said her students’ faces lit up as they connected to the stories presented by the facilitator Rachel Lehr. “My goal was to inspire their love of good books. They were eager to reread the stories in class after the discussions. They brought their new books to class, unasked, every day.”

We have created a *Connections* Advisory Committee to guide in evaluating the program. Manchester City Library director Denise Van Zanten, Derry Adult Learner Services Coordinator Kathy Mercer, Merrimack County Adult Learner Services Coordinator Susan Bulp,

longtime Humanities Council facilitator Jennifer Lee, and poet and scholar Mimi White currently comprise the *Connections* Committee.

Committee members also share their expertise in book selection. Books are selected for *Connections* series to introduce American history and culture to new Americans with beautiful illustrations and well-written texts. Another goal in selection is to offer books that tell of immigrants’ home cultures; the familiarity of illustrations and content serves as a bridge to English language acquisition. And the books representing a variety of cultures offer students an understanding of experiences that are not their own, but of their classmates and neighbors.

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Radhiki Menon, the publisher of Tulika Books, wrote a plea for acquiring books that tell stories in distinctive cultural voices and ones that avoid stereotypes. She also writes, “Multiculturalism isn’t a special category, or a special theme or a special view of history. It is a way of life we all share across borders.”

Children’s author Katherine Paterson describes a basic need she explores in her books: “to be validated and told we are important.” This need crosses cultural lines, as good books ultimately do.

With this desire to cross borders in mind, we’re working to add new series and update continuing series. “Living on the Earth,” includes *Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai* by Claire A. Nivola along with *The River Ran Wild* by Lynne Cherry about the cleanup of the Nashua River. The

series “Resolving Conflict” includes *Muskrat Will Be Swimming* by the poet Cheryl Savageau, now of New Hampshire, a story from an Abenaki girl’s perspective.

Julia Walking, who runs the Maine Humanities Council’s adult literacy program called “New Books New Readers,” says that she thinks of people in less diverse towns when she adds books that cross borders because it opens up the world for them. As a Concord *Connections* participant said after reading *The Breadwinner* by Deborah Ellis about an Afghan girl, “The book opened my eyes.”

President Obama used the word “patchwork” to describe us all in his

inaugural speech, and he said it was our strength. It’s a plain word. It makes me think of a frugal woman like my mother stitching squares of odd fabric together to make something warm. The word patchwork also connects to the basket of old clothes in *The Keeping Quilt*, the last book that Susannah Starr’s students read at the Latin American Center. In the book a Russian immigrant mother decides to make a quilt from the old clothes. She tells her daughter, “It will be like having the family in backhome Russia dance around us at night.”

We hope *Connections* books promote literacy for adults and their children, bring the joy of lifelong reading to them, and help home countries to dance around people in the night.

<http://www.nhbc.org/Connections.php>

The Poetry Place

A Report to the People

*By Patricia Fagnoli,
New Hampshire Poet Laureate*

On March 22nd, my term as New Hampshire Poet Laureate came to an end. This experience has greatly enriched my life. Because of it, I've visited parts of this beautiful state that I hadn't seen before. Because of it, I've met literally hundreds of poetry lovers and have learned again (as if I had ever forgotten) what joy and a sense of human connection poetry can bring to our lives.

Therefore, I'd like to use this final column as a "report to the people" of my activities during these last 2 ½ years, and to mention a few of the many "moments" that have meant the most to me.

When the Governor and the Executive Council named me to this honor, I had several goals: to raise awareness of the importance of poetry in children's lives; to do something for libraries; and to support the work of the many New Hampshire poets.

As a senior struggling with health problems, I feared not being able to live up to my own expectations or to find the stamina I knew I'd need. But now, on this sunny cold day, as I sit here taking account, I'm pleased with what's been accomplished. Here's a partial list:

1. With help and cooperation from the State Library, New Hampshire Writer's Project, Kyle Potvin of Splash Communications and Charlotte Cox of Cox Communications, I organized Children's Poetry in the Libraries Day. On that day, 41 volunteers went into 43 libraries in the state to help children write poems. Approximately 200 children and their parents took part. The Governor issued a proclamation, and articles about the program and the impor-

tance of poetry for children were published in almost every state magazine.

2. With the help of the N.H. State Council on the Arts, and a web link on their Poet Laureate Page, I administered the New Hampshire Poets Showcase, which since its inception has featured a different N.H. poet every other week... a total of 75 poets and poems.

3. I've given 42 readings in 21 New Hampshire towns. And also in CT, MA & VT. I've read in the State Capitol, The Frost Place and Frost Farm, eleven libraries, six bookstores, four colleges, four civic groups, and nine miscellaneous venues. I've taught workshops and judged contests.

4. I've taught classes in Contemporary New Hampshire Poetry to seniors in an Elderhostel and in Lifelong Learning Programs at Keene State College.

I feel so lucky to have been given this chance to spread my love of poetry. I've made a host of new friends and experienced things I will always remember. Let me share a few of them:

- Watching Poets Out Loud High School students recite memorized poems in the State Finals for the National Poets Out Loud Competition.
- Speaking about New Hampshire Poets at The Frost Farm in Derry.
- Sharing quarters with some incredible teachers and talking to others at The Frost Place Teachers Conference in Franconia.
- Carrying the Governor's Poetry Day Proclamation to several libraries on Children's Poetry Day where children eagerly rushed up to touch the gold seal.
- Having a doctor shyly come up to

me after my reading at the State Library and pass me a note saying that my poems had helped him.

- Talking to Hospice workers at their annual convention in Portsmouth about Poetry as a tool for healing...and realizing that they knew far more about it than I did. Standing back and letting them share their knowledge with each other.

There are more, of course, so many moving and wonderful memories. All of them remind me once again that poetry really *does* (through the power of language) have the ability to bring healing, to bring joy, to remind us of the importance of connecting with each other. Thank you.

The Next Poet Laureate

On March 3, 2009, the nomination of Walter Butts as NH Poet Laureate was ratified by the state Executive Council.

Butts is a resident of Manchester who teaches at Hesser College's Manchester campus and at a low residency Bachelor of Fine Arts program at Goddard College in Plainfield, Vt. Before moving to Manchester, Butts lived in Portsmouth for close to a decade where he and his wife, the poet S Stephanie, organized poetry reading series on the Seacoast.

Butts will serve a five-year term that comes with no specified duties – and no compensation. The new poet laureate plans to work in conjunction with independent bookstores and organizations around the state to promote poets and poetry. He also hopes to create opportunities for New Hampshire poets to network with small publishers in the state. He'll make himself available for readings and the like, as well.

Profile of a NH Library

Goffstown Public, Winner of the Finlay Challenge

*By Dianne Hathaway
Director, Goffstown Public*

Here at the Goffstown Public Library we like to tell people we aren't your typical public library and that we're kind of big for our britches. Our philosophy of customer service and getting out into the community has served us well over the past ten years.

Our staff completely buys into that philosophy and we assertively look for those qualities in the candidates we interview for available positions. Sure, we're tough but our public deserves a passionate library staff fully invested in what they do. We even developed a position a few years ago the focus of which includes outreach into the community and methods for personalizing our service to the people we serve.

One of the ways we do things differently is with library-wide programming for our community. We have sponsored barn dances, sock hops, The Vietnam Moving Wall, community concerts, nationally known exhibits, magicians, and more. Our staff's ability to think outside the box is a great quality and is one of the ways we were able to "go bionic" with the Finlay Challenge. We are philosophically progressive allowing us to stretch our services far beyond the reality of the library walls. It has definitely helped that we are part of GMILCS, Inc. (the cooperative of public libraries in communities surrounding Manchester) and that we have the ability to push the envelope with our automation and the library 2.0 features we can provide.

Winner of the 2008 Finlay Challenge

The Robert and Karin Finlay Foundation challenged every museum, his-

torical society and public library in the state to increase their membership between November 1, 2007 and October 31, 2008. As an incentive, the museum, historical society and library with the greatest percentage growth would receive \$25,000 each. The initiative was designed to "energize the cultural workforce and spark new interest and ideas to raise awareness of these facilities." The Goffstown Public Library was honored on December 17, 2008 with a \$25,000 check as the winner of the library component! We are thrilled that our year of hard work resulted in a 45.5% growth of our active members as well as money to serve our community.

At the Goffstown Public Library we embraced the Finlay Challenge wholeheartedly. Our staff fully engaged in the challenge and was excited from day one to be competing with about fifty other libraries. We have a great staff! In turn, our Board of Library Trustees was fully supportive of our goals and plans. That support extended to our Board of Selectmen and other town departments. On the public side we used every opportunity to talk about the challenge through our weekly newspaper column, on community television, at any and all public meetings, in the grocery store, everywhere. Our staff even "played" in a charity softball game as the "Dewey Divas" and had a blast! And we earned some great PR for the challenge.

Along with continuing our excellent, innovative programming for all ages we had months full of initiatives to gain new cardholders. We signed residents up for library cards at the polls and had fun meeting many new library users. We worked with parent/teacher groups to register first graders and carded others at an annual Easter Bunny Breakfast. We're on YouTube and our community television network with commercial spots we taped and edited ourselves. Judy Pancoast, local children's entertainer, wrote and recorded an original song, "Get Carded!" Call us for more details!

Our History

The history of a library in Goffstown began with the donation of 150 books by Miss Lucy Rogers to the town in 1888. Known then as the Rogers Free Public Library, the collection was housed in the Town Hall building from 1888 to 1907. In 1908 the town borrowed \$14,000 to build a public library and a memorial hall on land given by Frank Parker who further agreed to remove the existing buildings on the site. The work of removing the buildings and grading the ground was begun in the spring of 1908 and the building was constructed according to the plans of H.M. Francis and Sons of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, at a cost of \$12,125. As a memorial to local soldiers, the north room of the library includes two large marble tablets upon which are



inscribed the names of 381 Goffstown men who served in past wars. The front lamps were donated by the late Mrs. Harrison Hobson of Nashua, a former resident of Goffstown.

The building was dedicated on October 2, 1909, as the Goffstown Memorial Library. The ceremony included an address in the memory of wartime soldiers and the recitation of an original poem by Moses Gage Shirley entitled, "Our Library." On March 8, 1910, the name of the library was officially changed to the Goffstown Public Library although "Memorial Library" inscribed above the main entrance bears continued witness to the dual intent of the building's construction.

Historic photographs including glass negatives of the interior of the building taken shortly after construction indicate that despite the growth of the collection and the community, the architectural features of the building have remained largely unchanged since its erection.

The lower, basement level of the library was originally unfinished. It was improved in 1971 for use as the children's reading room and then again in 1997 with improved lighting, new carpeting and some minor architectural improvements. In 1997 an extension was added to the library on the north side of the building that includes an elevator, new entrance, additional emergency stairwell and improved circulation area. The attic level of the library was also renovated for use as a reference and magazine reading area, meeting room and staff work space.

Even our history speaks to community involvement and dedication! We'll be celebrating our library building's 100th anniversary later this year and are looking forward to the next one hundred years serving the Goffstown community.

Main Street Bookends of Warner

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To Kill a Mockingbird.

As a natural extension of all he did for the town, the community park he envisioned between the library and the bookstore will become a reality. Quoting from the Mission Statement, this community park will help to "reflect and sustain our town's heritage, character, and quality of life within a unique natural setting that supports a variety of artistic, cultural, educa-

tional, and social pursuits. The Jim Mitchell Community Park will serve as a magnet for the gifts, talents, and resources that the people of Warner and the surrounding area have to give, as well as provide an inviting outdoor place for people to relax, meet, and talk with friends and neighbors." The park will stand as a daily reminder to us to move respectfully, with humor and grace towards others, and to always remember that ... "Something wonderful IS happening right here in Warner."

"Neighbors bring food with death and flowers with sickness and little things in between. Boo was our neighbor. He gave us two soap dolls, a broken watch and chain, a pair of good-luck pennies, and our lives."

-- Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Grant Application Submitted for NH Reads *To Kill a Mockingbird*

The Center for the Book at the New Hampshire State Library has applied to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for a grant to support a statewide Big Read project focusing on *To Kill a Mockingbird* to be held in March 2010. We are planning a combination of programs created by project partners and offered in locations around the state and locally created programs held in individual communities during March 2010 as part of the statewide event. A single website and a publicity campaign coordinated at the state level will tie all the different events together into a single Big Read NH program. We coordinated a Big Read program on *Fahrenheit 451* in October 2007 following this same model (with 51 library and school partners) and found it to be a very successful approach to bringing together the diverse needs and interests of New Hampshire communities.

Prior to submitting the grant request we identified partners who would be part of the project if funding, both from NEA and from local sources, can be obtained. This group includes 75 public and special libraries, 15 schools, and these community partners: New Hampshire Writers' Project; New Hampshire Film & Television Office; New Hampshire Department of Cultural Resources; New Hampshire Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers; New Hampshire Bar Association; New Hampshire Public Radio; White Birch Books, North Conway; RiverRun Bookstore, Portsmouth; Water Street Bookstore, Exeter; Toadstool Bookshops, Peterborough, Milford, and Keene; Bayswater Book Company, Center Harbor; Gibson's Bookstore, Concord; Innisfree Bookshop, Meredith; Morgan Hill Bookstore, New London; Main Street BookEnds, Warner.

Ladybug Picture Book Award

New Hampshire children from preschoolers to those in third grade will vote in November 2009 to select the winner of the 2009 Ladybug Picture Book Award.

The Award is designed to promote early literacy and to honor the best in recent children's picture books. A committee of children's librarians from throughout New Hampshire selects 10 picture book titles early in the year. Then, during November, New Hampshire children from preschoolers to those in third grade choose the award winner. The winning picture book is announced at the end of the year. The author and illustrator of the winning book receive a crystal award created by Pepi Herrmann Crystal.

Additional details on the award, including printable ballots and tally sheets and an order form for stickers, are available on the Center for the Book's website at <http://nhbookcenter.org>. Tally sheets must be received at the State Library by Tuesday, December 1, 2009.



NH Books

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"If I needed an epiphany to make me truly serious about the problem, it came one snowy night when the dumpster outside the Yogurt Works caught fire." Since then they have built their own pretreatment plant for the yogurt waste. They turn much of their waste into methane gas and use it for energy production. In 2003, Stonyfield Farm installed New Hampshire's largest solar electric array, wanting to lead the way in proving that business can move away from fossil fuels and still be successful. The company also invests in projects that reduce the amount of carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere.

Stonyfield Farm continues to make news concerning environmental issues. They recently set aside some of their land in Londonderry to protect New England cottontail rabbits, a New Hampshire species endangered due to loss of habitat. Hirshberg was quoted in the press as stating they wanted to set an example for other companies to be environmentally responsible. Stonyfield Farm is also sponsoring the Stonyfield Farm Entrepreneurship Institute this spring, along with the Carsey Institute and the Whittemore School of Business and Economics at the University of New Hampshire. Hirshberg wants to help nurture and train "community-minded entrepreneurs."

Hirshberg is still working on his goal of improving his company's impact on the environment. And he maintained his commitment to the environment even as this book was produced. In addition to using recycled paper, they have invested in a manure digester to offset the global warming gas emissions from the production of this book.

2009 Ladybug Picture Book Award Nominees

Bats at the Beach by Brian Lies (Houghton Mifflin, 2006)

Bear's Picture by Daniel Pinkwater & D. B. Johnson (Houghton Mifflin, 2008)

Bedtime at the Swamp by Kristyn Crow & Macky Pamintuan (Harper Collins, 2008)

Big Chickens Fly the Coop by Leslie Helakoski & Henry Cole (Dutton, 2008)

Little Blue Truck by Alice Schertle & Jill McElmurry (Harcourt, 2008)

Tadpole Rex by Kurt Cyrus (Harcourt, 2008)

Those Darn Squirrels! by Adam Rubin & Daniel Salmieri (Clarion, 2008)

Too Many Toys by David Shannon (Blue Sky, 2008)

A Visitor for Bear by Bonny Becker & Kady MacDonald Denton (Candlewick, 2008)

Waking Beauty by Leah Wilcox & Lydia Monks (Putnam, 2008)

NH's Literary Treasures

Willa Cather

By Mary A. Russell

Willa Cather was born December 7, 1873, in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. When she was nine her family moved to Red Cloud, Nebraska – the setting of several of her most admired novels. In 1895 Cather graduated from the University of Nebraska and moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where she worked as a teacher, a journalist and an editor. In 1906 she moved to New York City to be an editor at McClure's Magazine. Edna Lewis, with whom Cather set up housekeeping in 1908, already lived in the city. The two would remain residents of NYC for the rest of their lives, spending summers on Grand Maman Island in the Bay of Fundy and autumns in New Hampshire. On April 24, 1947, Cather died and was buried, according to her wishes, in the old cemetery at Jaffrey Center, New Hampshire.

In a memoir of her long friendship with Willa Cather, the journalist Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant describes how Cather came to New Hampshire: "... I had the comfort of knowing that she had made her first connection with Jaffrey, New Hampshire, which was to prove, in a final sense, a new writing centre; a replacement of her Pittsburgh refuge.

"It was the high season for summer flowers. The pink bee-bush stood tall along the sandy roadsides, and the cone-flowers and rose mallow grew everywhere. Across the wire fence, in the long grass, I saw a clump of flaming orange-coloured milkweed, rare in that part of the state. I left the road and went around through a stretch of pasture that was always cropped short in summer, where the gaillardia came up year after year and matted over the ground with the deep, velvety red that is in Bokhara carpets. The country was empty and solitary except for the larks that Sunday morning, and it seemed to lift itself up to me and to come very close."

(from *My Antonia*)

Two women friends of Pittsburgh days had a hand in it. They had rented from Mrs. James Harvey Robinson, for the summer of 1917 and again in 1918, a charming house called High Mowing which has a sweeping view of Mount Monadnock. Below High Mowing to the west, on the thickly wooded fern-green road from Jaffrey to Dublin, stood the quiet Shattuck Inn, a hostelry of good repute known to Bostonians. There, Willa found bed and board for the first time in 1917. Her newly married friends, the Hambourgs, were with her. But her engrossing work claimed her mornings and the kind ladies of High Mowing offered to pitch her a tent on their lower slopes of field and meadow, backed by a thick fringe of woods. The tent was pegged to Mother Earth, furnished with table and camp chair. Willa, ever an early riser, found a path near the inn through this wood where lady's-slippers and Hooker's orchids grew. Over a stone wall next: she was carrying her pens and paper and the manuscript of *My Antonia* – and to her tent for two good hours of work. Most of Book Two, 'The Hired Girls,' was written in this hideout."

[*Willa Cather: A Memoir*. E.S. Ser-

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Letters About Literature 2009

This past fall the Center for the Book at the New Hampshire State Library invited readers in grades 4 through 12 to enter Letters About Literature 2009, a national reading-writing contest sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress in partnership with Target Stores. To enter, young readers wrote a personal letter to an author explaining how his or her work changed their view of the world or themselves. Readers selected authors from any genre—fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic. There were three competition levels in the program: upper elementary, middle school, and secondary. The contest theme encouraged young readers to explore their personal response to a book and then express that response in a creative, original way.

The 2009 competition received 802 letters from New Hampshire students. These letters were initially reviewed by a panel of readers working on behalf of the Library of Congress. That panel sent 123 letters back to New Hampshire for further judging. From that group of ‘round three’ letters fifty-five New Hampshire semi-finalists were selected across the three competition levels. A panel of judges here in New Hampshire selected the winning letters for New Hampshire.

Peyton Plante, a sixth grader at Three Rivers School, wrote a letter to Lois Lowry about her book *Number the Stars*, which was selected as the Granite State’s first place winner in the level I competition for students in grades 4 through 6. Ms. Plante wrote that this book taught her “how important it is to stand up for people who appear to be different.”

Merisa Dion, an eighth grader at West Running Brook Middle School

in Derry, wrote to Allen Say about *Allison*. Ms. Dion’s letter describes her experience of having been adopted and thanks Mr. Say for helping her, through his book, to “become more understanding about adoption.” This letter was the Granite State’s first place winner in the level II competition for students in grades 7 and 8.

Heather Coen, a ninth grader at Hopkinton High School, wrote her letter, which was selected as the Granite State’s first place winner at level III, to Martha Tod Dudman. She begins: “*Augusta Gone* affected me in a way I never thought a book could. It was like a book about my life, although it was more severe and intense.” Ms. Coen goes on to explain how this book, which she has read many times, helped her to recognize that she “needed to change

something” so she “wouldn’t become Augusta.”

The New Hampshire LAL judges for 2009 were Ann Hoey, Youth Services Coordinator at the New Hampshire State Library; Matthew Crosson, an English teacher at Manchester High School Central; Kristie Morris, a teacher at Lin-Wood Public School in Lincoln, NH; the poet, balladeer, and attorney John Perrault; and children’s authors Jennifer Ericsson and Muriel Dubois.

Each of the winning letters and a list of all of the 2009 Letters About Literature New Hampshire semi-finalists may be viewed at <http://www.nh.gov/nhsl/bookcenter/programs/letters.html> Information on the 2010 Letters About Literature competition will be available on the site in September.

Congratulations to the 2009 Letters About Literature New Hampshire semi-finalists!

Andi Fowler - Rye
Andy Carper - Hollis
Angelina Higgins - Lisbon
Avery Judd - Hanover
Brennan Young - Lee
Chris Walker - Portsmouth
Cole Williams - Hollis
Crystal Spaulding - Exeter
Curtis Fraser - Contoocook
Dan Lannan - Derry
Derek Roberts - Lisbon
Elizabeth Caverly - E. Hampstead
Elizabeth Krogman - Dunbarton
Emily Willard Bailey - Lyndeborough
Emma Sosa - Durham
Emma Williams - Lisbon
Ethan Michaud - Milford
Greg Bernash - Gilmanton I.W.
Hannah Rose Bush - Richmond
Heather Coen - Contoocook

Kristen Scarano - Nashua
Lauren Foster - Dunbarton
Lucia Lansing - Nashua
Megan Cullinane - Derry
Merisa Dion - Derry
Micaela Griffin - Hampstead
Michael Ramos - Marlborough
Michaela Dowling - Brookline
Molly E. Forgaard - Hollis
Nick Maccini - Pembroke
Nicole Andersen - Dunbarton
Nicole Wholey - Hollis
Olivia Black - Hollis
Peyton Plante - Pembroke
Rachel Hatch - Derry
Rhiannon Frizzell - Stratford
Samantha Hebert - Salem
Samantha Watterson - Gilford
Sarah Barnard - Hopkinton
Sarveen Shafiyar-Rad - Nashua

In addition to the students listed, there were 15 students honored as semi-finalists who did not give us permission to list their names.

Willa Cather

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geant. (Lippincott, 1953), p. 146-7.]

In addition to *My Antonia*, Cather worked on *Shadows of the Rock* (1932) while staying in Jaffrey. *Shadows* is set in late-seventeenth-century Quebec and focuses on a year in the lives of a widowed apothecary and his young daughter.

Jaffrey was also a place Cather went to rest up from the traumas of life. In 1927 Cather and Lewis spent two months at the Shattuck Inn resting up from the rigors of packing up their Greenwich Village house – which was to be demolished to make way for an apartment building. Cather wrote to a friend at the time that “going into storage was a good bit like having a funeral, and she was going to spend the next few weeks walking in the woods and lying about among the junipers before making any further plans.” [*Willa Cather: A Literary Life*. James Woodress. (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 413.]

In the summer of 1926 Cather went to the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, N.H. to work on *Death Comes for the Archbishop* – a story based on Archbishop Lamy, the first Bishop of New Mexico. Communal life didn’t suit her, though, and she only stayed a few weeks before returning, after a short visit to Grand Maman Island, to her usual quarters under the eaves of the Shattuck Inn in Jaffrey. Cather met Thornton Wilder at MacDowell that summer and wrote to him a dozen years later about his play, *Our Town*. She described it as “the loveliest thing produced in this country in a long time” [Woodress, p. 396] and said that it was “absolutely true to everything she had seen and felt in the many years she had been visiting New Hampshire.”

The NH Dublin Committee

By Charles Shipman,
Chair, NH Dublin Committee

Every spring, the New Hampshire State Library nominates books for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. The IMPAC Dublin Award is the world’s richest literary prize for a single work of fiction published in English. For the 2009 award, 157 libraries in 117 cities worldwide submitted titles, and it’s fascinating to look through the rich variety of novels from all over the world that are nominated.

This year, we had a special thrill—out of 146 titles on the 2009 “longlist” of nominees, one of our selections, *The Archivist’s Story*, by Travis Holland, was chosen for the 2009 shortlist! There are only eight books on the shortlist, selected by a committee of international writers and academics. It is quite an honor for us for one of our titles to be chosen. We were the only library to nominate *The Archivist’s Story*, so it’s especially gratifying that our votes really made a difference. The 2009 winner will be announced on June 11. We’ve got our fingers crossed that our pick will take home the prize.

All of the past prize winners and current nominees are available online at <http://www.impacdublinaward.ie>. For fans of contemporary fiction, I can’t think of a better way to broaden your reading horizon than to browse through the lists of nominated titles

both past and present. While you’re there, take a look at the Dublin Award newsletter, “Fiction Matters”. It includes plot summaries and author bios for every book nominated.

Nominations for the 2010 award were due at the beginning of May and the committee had some great books to choose from. Our choices were:



The International
I M P A C
Dublin
Literary Award

Olive Kitteridge by Elizabeth Strout (Random House, 2008)
Olive Kitteridge represents a pastiche—as the Oxford English Dictionary puts it—in the sense of “a medley of various ingredients, a hotchpotch, a jumble”—but cobbled together to

create a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga (Free Press, 2008)

This novel combines insightful social commentary, engaging storytelling, surprising plot twists and a unique narrative voice to expose the grim costs of a morally bankrupt society.

The Story of a Marriage by Andrew Sean Greer (Faber & Faber, 2008)

The story is a page-turner, the writing is beautiful, and the characters are strange and familiar at the same time. There are reflections on marriage, but also on youth, war, race, courage and love.

Check for Dublin Committee updates on the Center’s blog at <http://nhbookcenter.blogspot.com>

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Center for the Book
at the New Hampshire State Library
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promote reading,
books, literacy,
and the literary
heritage of New
Hampshire and to
highlight
the role that
reading and
libraries play in
enriching
the lives of the
people of the
Granite State.*

Book Notes Moves to the Blogosphere

*By Mary Russell, Director,
NH Center for the Book*

Like other nonprofit organizations, The Center for the Book at the New Hampshire State Library has been looking closely at how we use the resources available to us in these difficult economic times. We have decided that the printing and distribution of *Book Notes* may not be the best way to communicate with our members and other readers interested in New Hampshire's literary landscape.

We launched our blog, also called *Book Notes*, in November 2006 and since then both the content and the readership of the blog have grown significantly. Regular features include "Book of the Week," where I post a brief profile of a New Hampshire-related book that intrigued me that week; "Clippings from the

Blogosphere," which includes book-related info from various sources, not necessarily Granite State-specific; updates on programs and projects of the NH Center for the Book; and information about book-related events being held around the state. Looking forward, I am planning to add some features to the Book Notes Blog that have previously been part of this newsletter, including profiles of libraries and articles about New Hampshire's literary heritage. Postings by guest bloggers may also be added to the site. If you aren't yet a regular reader of the Book Notes Blog, I encourage you to check it out. You can subscribe to the blog through an RSS feed, find it on our FaceBook page, or you can have the postings delivered to your email address. Links to all of these options are on the right-hand panel of the blog at <http://nhbookcenter.blogspot.com>.

As of this issue (Spring 2009, Vol. 5, Issue 1) we are suspending print publication of *Book Notes*. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of several people who have worked on this newsletter: Ann Hoey and David Harris have both proof read every issue and made numerous improvements to each issue; David has also served as our narrator since Fall 2006 when *Book Notes* became an audio publication for distribution through NH's Talking Books program; Clint Jackson has been our printer since the beginning and has provided graphic expertise that has helped to keep the design of the newsletter clean and sharp. Without the support of these people, as well as everyone who wrote articles, delivered issues, and distributed this newsletter in their stores and libraries, *Book Notes* would not have been possible. Thank you!