



The Friends of the Island Library **REPORT**

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LBI Library Welcomes New Branch Manager

Toni Smirniw, a 20-year veteran of the Ocean County Library System, has been named Manager of the Long Beach Island Branch, replacing Linda Feaster. This is her second “tour of duty” at the LBI Library. “I went to the Long Beach Island as a full time library assistant in 1999,” Smirniw recalled. “Shortly thereafter I became the Principal Library Assistant/Circulation Supervisor of the LBI Branch and stayed there until January of 2009, when I became the Manager of the Tuckerton Branch.



“I am excited to get back to Long Beach Island and re-acquainted with the community,” Smirniw said. “My goals are to increase programming and outreach, maintain old partnerships and create new ones and encourage cooperation in the community in support of reading and literacy.

“I look forward to working with the Friends of the Island Library and supporting their efforts in fundraising for programming, supporting services, and reaching out to the community to foster relationships,” she added. “This group represents positive advocacy for a valuable community facility that is constantly changing and growing to meet the needs of users and stays current with future trends. I am happy to be a part of this journey and look forward to the collaboration.”

Smirniw has a BA in Sociology/Anthropology from Stockton University and a Master of Library Science from Texas Woman’s University. She also has a Master of Science in Nonprofit Management and Leadership degree from Walden University. Toni and her husband, Vic, have two children, a daughter Lexi, 21 and son Jac, 18. Both are currently enrolled in an aviation program at ACCC to get their drone pilot certifications. “We have had many animal friends in the family and all our animals are rescues of one sort or the other,” she added.

“I have always loved the library and have made it my home for the last 25 years,” Smirniw noted. “I am looking forward to this new phase of my journey.”

Tales of the Rough Writer

Perhaps best known for his swaggering style, his love of his country and his work towards a “Square Deal” for all Americans, Theodore Roosevelt actually made his living as a writer. The story of his life as an author will be held on Wednesday, February, 21 at 3 p.m. in the library meeting room.

Learn about the man, his family, and his times through a few excerpts from the 40 books and 150,000 letters he wrote in his lifetime. A PowerPoint presentation of photos of TR on his great adventures and at home with his beloved family will accompany the presentation given by Cara Bowers, a longtime member of the Theodore Roosevelt Association, and a

docent at the Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace in Manhattan for several years.

They Served ‘Over There’

“Doughboys: The American Soldier of WW1,” a talk presented by Jeff Brown and co-sponsored by the Friends of the Island Library and the Great John Mathis Chapter of the D.A.R., will take place on Saturday, February 17 at 2 p.m. Brown, in a PowerPoint presentation, will give insight into the WW1 soldiers as they fought to end “the war of all wars,” and will further illustrate the soldiers’ experience by presenting several authentic artifacts from WW1. Also, see the exhibit, “The Great ART War,” presented by the D.A.R. hanging in the meeting room for the month of February.

Words of Love, Sung by Fred Miller

Join the Friends of the Island Library on Wednesday, February 7 at 7 p.m. for an evening of song devoted to friendship, caring and love. “A Valentine Lecture in Song” will feature live keyboard music, song and comments provided by versatile performer, Fred Miller. Miller studied piano as a boy with Ralph Berkowitz, former dean of Tanglewood, and accompanist for 20 years to the great cellist Piatagorsky. In New York, he studied acting for two years with stage and film legend Geraldine Page and vocal performance with Tony award winner Helen Gallagher.

A commercial actor and writer, Miller wrote and broadcast his own radio program on WDVR 89.7FM, and managed the Copper Penny Players actors group for 25 years.

Brain Games

Now in its 12th year, Brain Games, a Friends sponsored program, is intended to stimulate the brain and offer both a good time and a challenging experience. “New players are always welcome,” said Judy Bouton, who directs the program. Brain Games is held from 1 to 2:30 p.m. on the first and third Monday each month.

Adult Writers Group

Are you looking for support from other writers to improve your writing skills? Then join this year-round writers group, led by Richard Morgan. Established, beginning and aspiring writers alike are welcome at these meetings that are held on the first and third Tuesdays of the month from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

MLK’s Vision Spurs Friends’ Volunteer Initiative

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’ ” Martin Luther King challenged his supporters. It is in that spirit that the King holiday on the third Monday in January has also been designated a National Day of Service.

So it was fitting that the Friends of the Island Library decided to initiate Project InVOLve at the library on January 15. Retiring Friends President Judy Bouton led the effort to match up prospective volunteers with non-profit organizations that need extra hands and lively minds to provide the services they do.

“People who are only here part of the year often ask me, ‘What’s there to do in the winter?’” Bouton said. “There’s a lot to do, particularly for those who are willing to use their talents that served them so well in their ‘working’ career to help organizations and services devoted to improving the LBI and surrounding communities.”



Bouton reached out to organizations in southern Ocean County that rely on volunteers to reach their goals and asked them to provide information on what they do and where their need for talent resides. More than a dozen organizations attended the initial meeting of Project InVOLve, and the event drew more than 40 area residents eager to learn about volunteer opportunities.

“There are jobs for everyone on LBI,” said Christine Rooney, representing the Lighthouse International Film Festival. All the presenters at the meeting echoed Rooney’s statement. Do you love animals and need to exercise? Walk a dog at the Southern Ocean County Animal Shelter.

Can you swing a hammer with the best of them? Join the housebuilders at Habitat for Humanity. Do you have a calling to help people when emergencies occur? The Beach Haven First Aid Squad and the Surf City Volunteer Fire and Emergency Medical Services have openings just for you.

“The initial gathering of Project InVOLve was hugely successful,” Bouton said. “The presenters were wonderful, and the audience was attentive.” Bouton, who parlayed her skills as a career teacher to pilot the Friends of the Island Library for five years and to lead the popular Brain Games sessions at the library’s meeting room – both volunteer tasks – is confident that the event will spur both organizations and volunteers to forge matches that will enhance community spirit in southern Ocean County.

Hail and Farewell

As befitting the Roman god Janus, a two-face (literally!!) deity, January offers us the opportunity to look back at the past, while simultaneously looking forward at what is to come. In the first month, daylight is short, and winter weather can be terrible, as it was this year. Yet, the promise of a new year and warmer weather lay before us. Too often the end of the previous year is tinged with regrets, missed opportunities, sadness. But shouldn’t we also reflect on the year just passed with an “attitude of gratitude?”

I was thinking these thoughts earlier this month when I learned that two of our board members. President Judy Bouton and Hospitality Chair Marie Cooper, were going to leave their volunteer posts. For years, both have left their mark on the Friends’ board, each in her own way. As befitting a role that was wide-ranging, Judy was very visible as the Friends expanded its fundraising efforts outside the library building into the community. Several years ago, she also took over the reins of Brain Games, one of the most popular Friends offerings, from Phyllis and Basil Karp.

By contrast, Marie focused on one major task, hospitality. At every Friends program, she was there, providing hot or cold drinks and baked goods. Marie was there before the programs began and was still emptying coffee carafes and disposing of cake crumbs after the last program attendee had left the library. Marie Cooper was constant; she was there – all the time.

Thank you, Marie, for your devotion to your job, and Judy Bouton for your wide reach. Thanks to all who have served on the Board of the Friends of the Island Library, the county’s oldest Friends group, for your service to your community and its library.



Wanted! Fundraising Volunteer

The Friends of the Island Library are looking for volunteers with some experience in fundraising and organizing fundraising events to help us continue our work of providing excellent programs, enhancing the library’s facility, and funding our two scholarships. If interested, please email or send a letter to the Friends’ post office box with your contact information. Thank you!