Event complements citywide reading effort

By Pamela Powers
Menomonie News Bureau

MENOMONIE — The latest book picked for the communitywide Menomonie Reads program was chosen for its appeal to high school and college students, as well as local residents.

This year, Menomonie Reads features "In the Time of the Butterflies" by Julia Alvarez.

Set in the Dominican Republic in 1960, the novel tells the story of the Mirabal sisters, three young women who are assassinated after visiting their jailed husbands. The three beautiful sisters are found near their wrecked Jeep at the bottom of a 150-foot cliff on the north coast of the Dominican Republic. The official state newspaper reports their deaths as accidental. It does not mention that a fourth sister lives. Nor does it explain that the sisters were among the leading opponents of Gen. Rafael Leonidas Trujillo's dictatorship.

"Usually we look for books that have a broad appeal," said Ted Stark, director of Menomonie Public Library. "It's a historical novel based on true events. I think it will be a good story for people."

Library youth services director Jodi Bird said the book has a great plot.

"I like that it is based on a true story," she said. "The historical aspect is interesting to me."

Menomonie Reads is sponsored by the Friends of the Menomonie Library and the library foundation. Copies of the book are bought and given away starting Thursday at the kickoff of Menomonie Reads. The goal is to encourage reading and create discussion around literature.

Related events

The kickoff starts at 6:30 p.m. Thursday with Antonio Freeman of UW-Eau Claire speaking on the Dominican Republic and the Order of Trujillo in the Gallery Room of Mabel Tainter Center for the Arts, 205 Main St. E.

At 7:30 p.m. in the center's theater, the Twin Cities-based nine-piece orchestra Salsa del Soul will perform dance music from Spanish speaking regions of the Caribbean.
Concert tickets are free and should be picked up at the box office of the theater. Free copies of the book will be handed out that evening. Copies also will be available at the library following the kickoff event.

The movie based on the book will be shown at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 9, at the public library, 600 Wolske Bay Road, and also at 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 19, at the library.

At 1 p.m. Saturday, conversation about the book will be at Raw Deal, 603 Broadway St. S., in downtown Menomonie. The eatery will feature tastes of organic coffee from the Dominican Republic farm Café Alta Gracia, partially owned by Alvarez, the book's author. The organic farm strives for sustainability and fair trade.

Enlivening the conversation will be Mimi French, Farmer to Farmer board member who just returned from Guatemala and can speak about coffee farming practices; Crystal Halvorson the manager at Menomonie Market Food Cooperative; Glenda Jones, UW-Stout English and women studies instructor; and Mary McManus of the UW-Stout Ally Center.

Photographer Mark Aumann will be displaying his "Freight House Nicaragua Atlantic Coast Exhibit."

Discussions on the book will be at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 20, and 10:15 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 23, at the library. The discussions will be led by library staff.

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