



FOUNDED IN 1953

# FRIENDS of the Sierra Madre Library

May 2020

## President's Message

Dear Friends and Partners,

Are you stir crazy yet? Have you cleaned every closet in your home? Have you baked and cooked until you've run out of flour and other ingredients? Have you visited several stores to find TP, masks, gloves, Clorox wipes, and hand sanitizers? Are you staying in your PJ's all day? Are you constantly on your computer or iPad on a Zoom conference? These are certainly different (trying) times.

Over the past month, your Friends Board has been busy working on how to handle our fundraising efforts. We annually commit \$55,000 to supplement the library's programs. As you already know, the Library was closed for the April Best Used Book Sale. We are currently discussing how we can safely have a **June Best Used Book Sale**. It might be a Drive-by sale? We don't know if we can have it or if the Library will be open. Please stay tuned.

Our next slotted fundraiser, the fantastic **Art Fair**, should have been taking place as you receive your May Newsletter. It is with sadness on both parts, Friends as well as the Artists, that we had to cancel it. Then, the next fundraiser, the **Wine and Cuisine Tasting** which was scheduled for the first weekend in October, has also been CANCELLED. Stay tuned for an update on holding an online fundraiser in place of the Wine Tasting.

The **Annual June Meeting and Volunteer Recognition Dinner** that was originally scheduled for Wednesday, June 17 at Sierra Madre United Methodist Church has now been changed. 1<sup>st</sup> VP Governance, **Margaret Quigley**, has been working diligently getting the board slate together as well as examining the bylaws to see how to "safely" have a meeting to elect officers and conduct business. After our Wednesday, May 20 Board Meeting, we will notify you of the option to cast your vote for the 2020-2021 Board of Directors.

We are also unsure about the Sunday **Concerts in the Park** where we are scheduled to co-sponsor "The Skinny Ties" on Sunday, August 9. Will we have a Stage 4 status by then to assemble as we would like?

On a high note, the Friends helped show appreciation to our Sierra Madre Library Staff during **National Library Week** (April 19-25) by providing lunch on Thursday and Friday. We provided lunch for two days because the staff had to divide in order to "social distance" themselves. Perhaps we need a new Library to accommodate things like this?

**Christine Smart**, City Librarian, told me during this pandemic that the books are flying off of the shelves through the call in and reserve check out method. Do we have any more books left in the Library, Christine? I hope that by June we will have more clarity and certainty in the world for all of us. Be well and stay safe.

Julia Brady

## A LETTER FROM THE CITY LIBRARIAN

Dearest Friends and Library Supporters,

I hope this newsletter finds you safe at home.

As I write this, I want desperately to provide you with certainty and peace in a changing world. (Something I know is impossible.) What I can do, is share some of the beautiful moments I've been privileged to have with Library patrons during this difficult time ... in the hopes to share some joy and maybe encourage you to join the "safer at home" fun.

When we first closed, I spent hours trying to work through the best ways to continue engaging the public through a closed sign. We are checking out materials with contactless checkout, enjoying bi-weekly community seek and find activities, and publishing a variety of at home crafts and science experiments on our social media platforms. Our first hunt asked participants to simply put a teddy bear in their front window, to encourage young people to read and participate in a bear hunt. My favorite message of happiness came from a childless adult, who said she leaves her front window open now, in order to hear the squeals of joy coming from the street when her bear is found.



Checkout of materials, as you may have seen from last month's newsletter, is such a fabulous way to help support families staying home. Patrons are overwhelmingly grateful, calling staff a God-send and a life-saver when materials are carefully crafted and curated for the individual needs of patrons who are getting a little antsy at home. Staff continue to **practice extreme** measures to stay away from both the public and other staff, but are lighthearted at knowing we are able to help the community in this way.

These fun activities continue to keep our patrons engaged in community building, even when we are not able to be together. But there have been some more difficult challenges to providing access that we are working towards addressing. Strain on home internet and slow speeds create issues for patrons who are working from home. With funds 100% from the Friends of the Library, we are purchasing and working towards increasing internet access outside of our building and into the parking lot, to allow patrons a second space to work, utilizing our high-speed fiber internet.

Looking ahead, we will likely remain closed to the public, or by appointment only for some time into the future. We won't be able to reevaluate until at least May 15<sup>th</sup>, when new county orders are announced; but I strongly believe that library services are going to be extremely valuable to patrons as all of us are working to rebuild. A Library in a recession is a light in the dark, bringing resources and materials to everyone equally.

Thank you for your support of the Friends, without whom so much of our library services would not be possible. As many of their fundraising opportunities are similarly cancelled or diminished, your support has become truly irreplaceable. Please give us a call if we can help in any way ... and be safe.

Yours sincerely,

**Christine Smart**,  
City Librarian

## BEST USED BOOK SALE

The Best Used Book Sale for **Friday, June 5** and **Saturday, June 6** will not be held in our usual manner.

We are hoping to arrange an alternative type of sale. Please check the Friends website [www.sierramadrelibraryfriends.org](http://www.sierramadrelibraryfriends.org) about May 20<sup>th</sup> or the Friends June newsletter for details.

Thank you for continuing to save your donations for the committee. We hope to be welcoming your books in the near future as soon as we return to working in the basement.

## PARTNERS PROGRAM

It is with concern that all our **Partners** are faring well throughout these worrisome days – not only for each one of you and your families – but also for all those who have touched your lives and, thereby, the life of the **Partners** in meaningful and generous ways over many years gone by. We thank Gerald (Jerry) Carlton – long-time **Partner** and Carol Cerrina – also a loyal long-time **Partner** – for renewing your memberships for another year. Your continuing faithful support is greatly appreciated. It is with hope in our hearts that we all meet soon again in happier circumstances. Thank you again for your caring support!

## MARY TUMILTY ENDOWMENT FUND HAS BEEN RENAMED

The Finance Committee of the Friends of the Sierra Madre Library made a recommendation at a Board of Directors meeting on February 19, 2020 to rename the Mary Tumilty Endowment Fund since it was determined that it did not meet the requirements of an Endowment Fund. A motion was made and seconded to Rename and Restate the Mary Tumilty Endowment Fund “(MTEF)” to the Mary Tumilty Fund “(MTF).” The Motion passed; the resolution was approved.

The Mary Tumilty Endowment Fund was established in 1984 in honor of then City Librarian, Mary Tumilty. Invested funds are distributed at the request of the City Librarian, with approval by a majority vote of the Friends Board of Directors, and will still be used to promote the educational and cultural interests of the community or for capital repairs or improvements for the Sierra Madre Public Library.

**Darlene Traxler**  
Treasurer

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee will present the slate of officers for the Friends of the Sierra Madre Library Board of Directors 2020-2021 at the Wednesday, May 20 Board Meeting.

There are still a few positions available for Directors at Large and we also will need a chair for next year's **Art Fair**.

If you are interested in joining the Board or need more information please contact **Margaret Quigley** at 626-355-5546.

## READER'S REVIEW

*This month's review is*  
by **Tom Tomlinson**

### ***PLAGUE LIT IN THE AGE OF COVID-19***

Over the past 2500 years in the West, plagues have arguably killed humankind in numbers that make the carnage of war seem junior by comparison; pandemics, then, are endemic to the human condition. No wonder then that responses to plagues have generated a sizeable plague literature over the past 25 centuries that in sum has sought to describe and explain how contagions great and small came to be; and, how they were managed, assigning blame for inactions or wrong actions and praise for those whose decisions appeared to stem the scourges of pestilence. In our time of COVID-19 which so pinches our lives, I diverge from the usual task expected of my fellow reviewers and me of one review of one book to suggest several works that deal with plagues that have come to roost on the bookshelves of my mind.

Writing in the middle of the fifth century BCE, former Athenian general, statesman and Greek historian Thucydides authored *History of the Peloponnesian War* a 30-year military contest between Sparta and Athens; Sparta won. *History* has become required reading for every undergraduate and graduate student of history. Thucydides dissects the reasons for the Athenian defeat, which, among other factors, included a devastating plague that historians suggest might have been yellow fever, or smallpox. The death toll has been estimated between 75,000 and 100,000, a loss from which Athens never recovered. Undergirding Thucydides *History* was his thesis that actions of men, rather than the workings of Greek gods, led to the downfall of the Athenian city state.

Not so for Biblical accounts of pandemics. The Bible, especially in the Old Testament, most noticeable in Genesis, describes God's promise/threat to rain down on earth His vengeance in the form of plagues and pestilence with hordes of frogs, snakes, black flies and locusts. The Biblical plagues both as Devine threat and action came forth as evidence of the Almighty's anger for bad human actions and a warning against future behaviors.

Tales of Europe's centuries-long combat with the Bubonic plague, especially virulent from roughly 1200-1500, generated a host of literary responses, one of which was the disquieting children's nursery story, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. Part of the Western literary corpus, Pied Piper is a saga of one German city's effort to purge itself from disease baring rats. With his magical flute, Hamlin's Pied Piper lived up to the terms of his medieval contract by exterminating the rodents but sought revenge when the city elders failed to honor their financial obligations. Retribution followed at great traumatic cost to Hamlinians. Moral of the story: Don't mess with the rat exterminator.

One of the last, yet most virulent outbreaks of the Bubonic plague in Europe occurred in London in 1665. Killing upwards of 100,000, roughly 25% of the city's population, the rendering of the event appeared in the contemporary *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, a staple of English classes for decades; Daniel Defoe's work of fiction *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) was in part based on Pepys diary.

A recent rendering of fictional plagues, Albert Camus *The Plague* (1947) is my favorite, unnervingly so. Set in Oran, Algeria, sometime in the 1940s, Camus lean prose captures the arrival of Black Death, and the all too familiar ways in which his chief characters respond to the contagion. The novel is chillingly contemporary.

While reading about while living through a daunting and as yet unappeased appearance of our pandemic de jour can be tough sledding, there is good news: we are alive to read how our predecessors described their behaviors during the social dislocations of their plagues.

Note that only Camus is available in our Library. But, given that our lives are informed by Wikipedia, you will easily be able to dig further into works cited here; and you will discover other literary responses as well. Until we can all mosey through the stacks, pull books off the shelves, and sit on the floor while thumbing through books that we didn't realize we were looking for, here's wishing you good on-line research, good health and the good memory to mask up!

**CALL #: FIC CAMUS**