



‘Stories ... Define Ourselves as a People’: A Preview of the Wilma Dykeman Stokely Lecture

By Kaitlynn Copinger

Ask 12 people what it’s like to live in and represent Appalachia, and you’ll get a dozen different answers. Ask two Appalachian authors? If you attend the upcoming Wilma Dykeman Stokely Lecture, you’ll be treated to some insightful reflections about the topics of faith, struggle, resilience and redemption from two authors who represent our region: Terry Roberts, author of *A Short Time to Stay Here* and *That Bright Land*, and Halle Hill, author of *Good Women*.

To give you a sense of what to expect, we asked Terry, author of five novels set in Southern Appalachia and a sixth narrated by an Appalachian character, to share some of his thoughts. His answers have been condensed and edited for clarity. Please join us at 7 p.m., Feb. 20, at the East Tennessee History Center to hear more from Terry and Halle. Attendance is free.

How does Appalachia influence your work?

There are at least two versions of the region that are constantly in play. One is Appalachian life as experienced by people whose families have lived and worked here for generations, and the other is the stereotypes about Appalachian people held by outsiders. There’s a constant stress in [my] books between insider wit and wisdom versus outsider assumptions that are often simply untrue. Needless to say, that tension exists to this day, so my work feels very contemporary to me even though it is set in the past.

What have you learned about this region, through your research, writing, or the reception to your work, that you didn't know before?

One of the things that I’ve learned is that many of the essential questions with regard to the region that existed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are still right there in front of us. Do the mountains exist for us (to be bought and sold) or do we exist for the mountains (as puny beings here for only a short time)? Should we recognize and celebrate those whose ancestry is woven into the culture and language of this place — or must we bow to those who come here with money and privilege simply because they find it beautiful?

In recent years, we have lived through significant upheaval, including a pandemic, political tumult, and natural disaster, including the devastation in nearby Asheville and the surrounding region. How can storytelling help us to build resilience in times of struggle?

What I've learned is that a good book is more than just a distraction or entertainment. Story is a powerful and lasting antidote to destruction and loss. In the case of this landscape and these people, my novels have taken on a whole new layer of meaning that they didn't have before because they are now part of the narrative record of what this landscape was like before the flood. They are also a reminder that we've lived through deadly pandemic and violent politics before — and survived.

Seen in this light, my role as a writer changes. I am handing down stories — both comic and tragic — from generations of mountain people who fought through epidemic and disaster. Stories will survive the droughts and floods that inevitably come, stories we tell to define ourselves as a people.



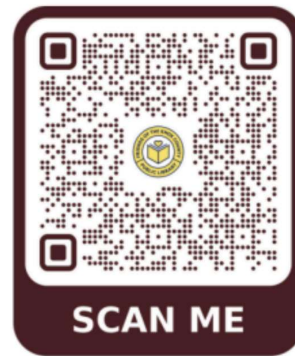
Celebrate the love this month!

February is National Library Lovers Month. We hope you'll join Friends of the Library in celebrating!

Here's how you might get involved:

- Drop into your favorite branch library with a note or a small gift to thank the staff for what they do.
- Take advantage of their services: Browse for a book, join one of the library system's many book clubs, take your kids or grandkids to a storytime, or drop in on one of the many events the library hosts for adults. Click [here](#) to see what's coming up.
- Share your love of the library with your friends on social media or in person. Follow Friends on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to learn about upcoming book sales and events.
- Support the library by [joining](#) Friends of the Knox County Public Library or making a [donation](#).
- Stay home and read a book on February 15 and donate what you would have spent on a night out to the [Stay Home and Read a Book Ball](#).

You're invited to read for the Library



by Crystal Sansom

We invite you to the 5th annual Stay Home and Read a Book Ball on Saturday, February 15, 2025. Enjoy reading at home while supporting our upcoming Children's Festival of Reading in May! Donate and contribute the amount you would have spent on a night out to help raise funds for this community event.

Wesley Bennett, a native Knoxville, will serve as the Honorary Book Ball Chair. Bennett is the author of "The Kitty of Knoxville," a children's book that honors our unique city.

Bennett has this to say about libraries:

"Think of everything that goes into creating a library. Our cities set aside land, pay for the construction of buildings, and then purchase thousands of books to fill them. Not only do libraries welcome everyone to come read their books, they allow us to take dozens of them back to our homes, to enjoy for weeks at a time. With all of the time, money, and effort put forth by authors and our local government, it's hard to believe that checking out a book is free. As a reader, it makes me feel very lucky."

Join us in supporting the Children's Festival of Reading and Friends of the Library!

To RSVP to the Stay Home and Read a Book Ball on February 15, donate [online](#) or by scanning the QR code. Then, enjoy shopping for books for the ball with a 20% off coupon (good through February 28, 2025) from Union Ave Books, and join us as we read for a cause!

Thank you for your support!

Imagination Library celebration draws a crowd



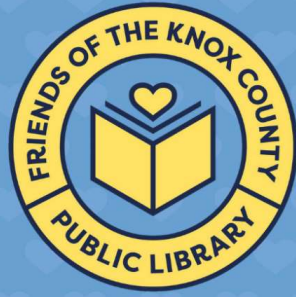
By Susan Alexander

More than 600 people filled the Tennessee Theatre on Jan. 19, despite the blustery winds and snow flurries. They were there to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Knox County – as well as Dolly's birthday. They gobbled cupcakes, made party hats, took pictures with (fullsize cardboard) Dolly, danced in the theater aisles to peppy tunes, watched a video of Dolly reading to them, got a musical performance from the Holston Middle School Show Choir, and, finally, enjoyed a viewing of her popular movie *Nine to Five*.

Bonny Naugher, chair of the Imagination Library advisory board and president elect of Friends of the Knox County Public Library, was happy with the turnout on such a blustery day. "It's always fun to celebrate Dolly's birthday in January," she said, "but it's especially meaningful to celebrate 20 years of Imagination Library in Knox County." The program mails about 19,000 books each month, reaching about 73 percent of Knox County children from birth to age 5.

Romance at Rothrock

Love is in the air in February at Rothrock Used Book Shop. Buy one romance novel and get one free! Rothrock is open Monday to Saturday from 10:30am - 4:30pm and Sundays from 1:00pm - 4:30pm. Come see us!



Used Book Sales

2025

Proceeds benefit
Knox County
Public Library

Most books
\$2 or less

Check out
our new
eBay store!



[knoxfriends.org](https://www.knoxfriends.org)

JAN 8-14	Hi-Wire Brewing During Business Hours hiwirebrewing.com 
FEB 1	Fountain City Branch Library 10:00–5:00
FEB 15	South Knox Branch Library 10:00–5:00
MAR 8	Powell Branch Library 10:00–5:00
APR 12	Sequoyah Branch Library 10:00–5:00
APR 25-26	Farragut Branch Library 10:00–5:00 1:00–5:00
MAY 2-3	Bearden Branch Library 10:00–5:00 1:00–5:00
MAY 17	Children's Festival of Reading 10:00 - 3:00 (World's Fair Park) 
MAY 31	Halls Branch Library 10:00–5:00

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County Public Library.**



Friends of the Knox County Public Library

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