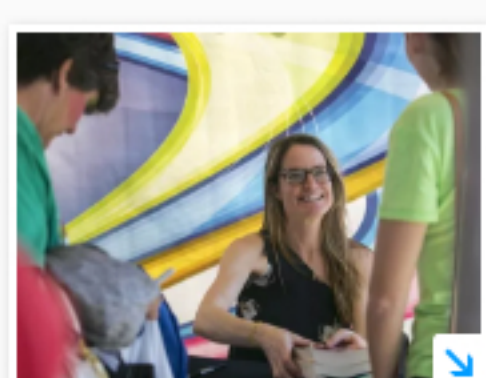


'Pretty Little Liars' author dishes at SWFL reading fest

Laura Ruane, lruane@news-press.com Published 10:45 a.m. ET March 18, 2017 | Updated 5:09 p.m. ET March 18, 2017



Book lovers came out to meet their favorite authors and to have fun at the Southwest Florida Reading Festival on Saturday, March 18, 2017, at Centennial Park in Fort Myers. Amanda Inscore/news-press.com



(Photo: Amanda Inscore/The News-Press)

Moms and dads, don't read too much into the name of this book series:

"Pretty Little Liars" doesn't encourage teens to lie. Rather, "the books are about secrets, the power of secrets and what happens when secrets are exposed," said Sara Shepard, the author.

The big themes: "Friendship, making the right choices, and figuring out who you are," Shepard added.

Shepard, 39, a Pittsburgh resident and the mother of two young sons, was one of more than a dozen featured writers at the Southwest Florida Reading Festival on Saturday in downtown Fort Myers' Centennial Park.



18 Photos

Southwest Florida Reading Festival



The 18th annual event was organized by the Lee County Library System to promote reading and the library.

It's admission-free and included book signings, contests, meet-and-greets, author talks, readings, activities and free books for kids and teens, a teen battle of the bands and more.

The main goals "are to bring the library to people who don't normally go to the library," said festival coordinator Margie Byers.

The festival relies on volunteers and gifts. Byers said literary-themed fund-raisers in prior months paid for the estimated \$125,000 in hard costs, which didn't include in-kind donations.

Shepard's "Pretty Little Liars" inspired the ABC Family/Freeform television series of the same name, and which has begun its seventh and final season.

At her author's talk, she confessed to not asking too much about the show's plots, so she can be just as genuinely surprised as the fans, and share her reactions through social media.

She also acknowledged a one-time gig helping for former model and TV personality Tyra Banks with a novel.

"She was very nice, very creative. She had her idea, and didn't want to change it.

"It got a little crazy."

Fort Myers resident Siva McAteer and her daughters, Olivia, 15 and Ilise, 14, listened raptly. They'd just purchased "The Amateurs," Shepard's newest work.

Olivia McAteer said she likes Shepard's books because "there's lots of suspense."

Younger sister, Ilise, just read her first "Pretty Little Liars" novel: "I'm really into the show."

Their mother confessed to having not read any of the books nor to have seen the show.

"For me as a mom, I'm just glad they're reading – and staying out of trouble."

Connect with this reporter @Alvascribe (Twitter) and LauraPatrickRuane (Facebook).



Chloe Xikes, 7, left, and Claire Lane, 8, paint together at the Cape Coral Library booth at the Southwest Florida Reading Festival on Saturday, March 18, 2017, at Centennial Park in Fort Myers. (Photo: Amanda Inscore/The News-Press)

Little-known library services:

*Request books online, for delivery to your desired Lee County library branch.

*Read electronic magazines. The system has more than 200 titles, including such mainstream favorites as Self and Fortune.

*Download legal forms that are valid in the state of Florida.

*Study a foreign language, online.

*View streaming movies, including new releases.

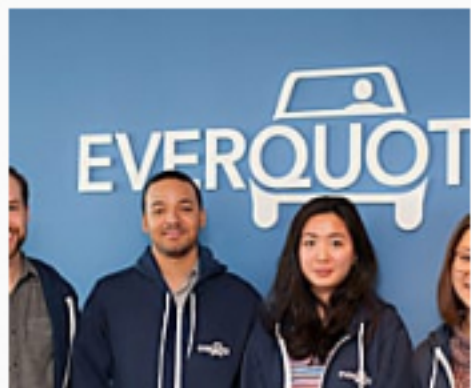
*Prep for tests such as the AP, ACT and GMAT.

SOURCE: Lee County Library System

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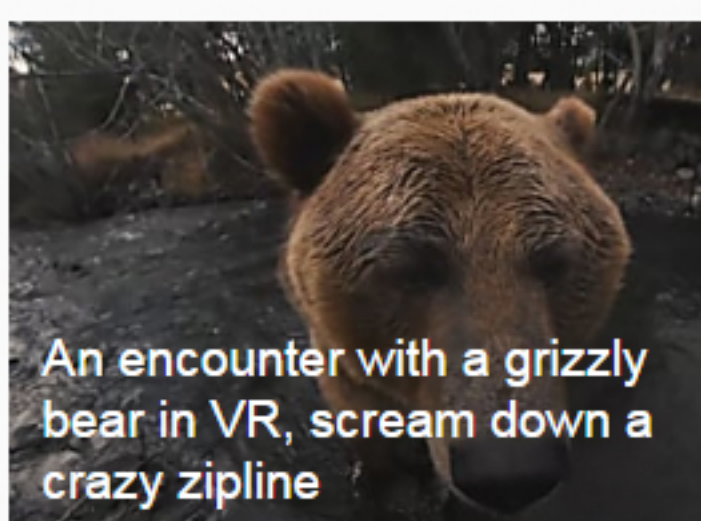
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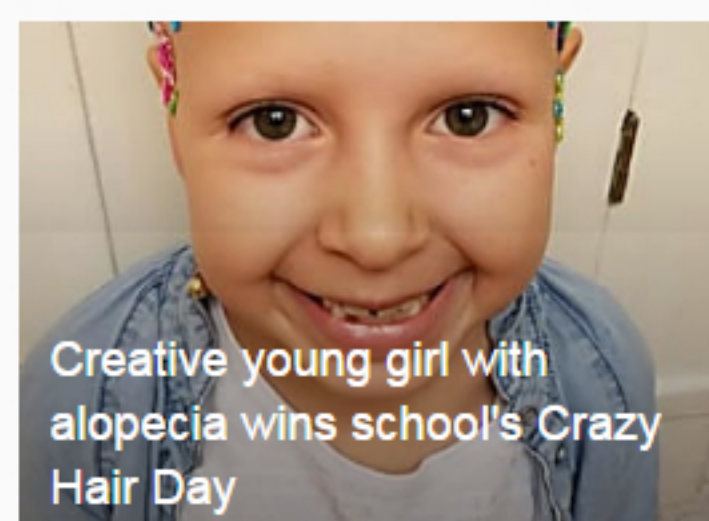
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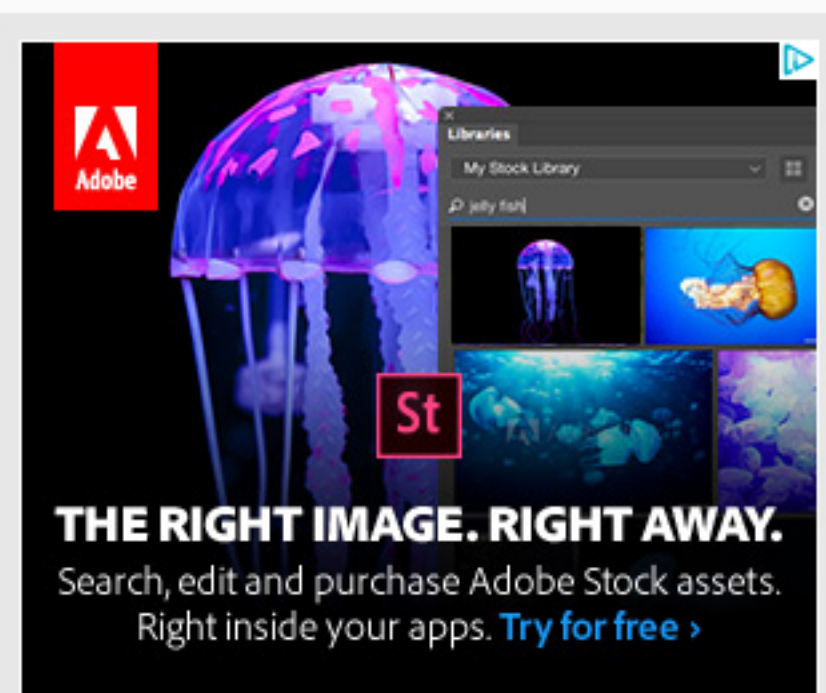
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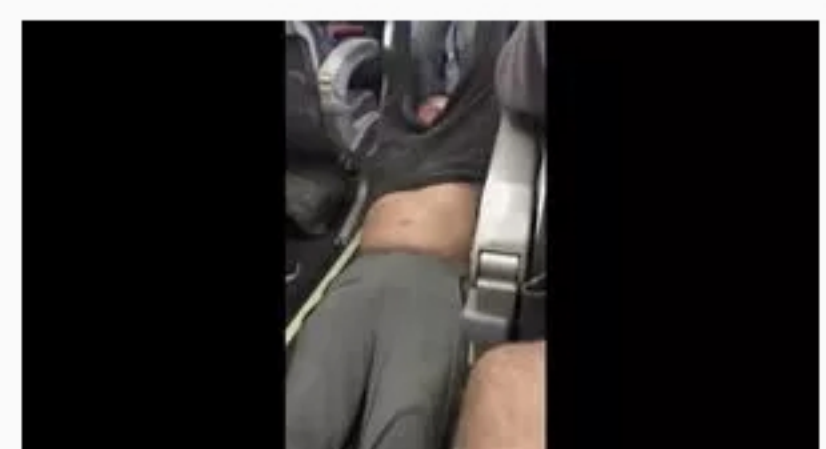
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