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THE RIVER WEEKLY NEWS

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Pat Carroll photos provided

Lalai Sapp Hamric

Beverly McNew

Grande Dames Tea To Honor Local Women

PACE Center for Girls of Lee County has selected three more women to be honored at the 9th annual Grande Dames Tea honoring some of the community's most revered women.

This year's honorees are:

• Pat Carroll, 75, of Fort Myers is the managing partner of Carroll Properties, which currently owns Best Western Waterfront, Gulf Star Marina on Fort Myers Beach and four restaurants. At one time, Carroll and her former husband owned more than 44 businesses in eight states, including hotels, restaurants, marinas, gift shops, RV parks, golf courses and a radio station. She is a leader in philanthropy as well as business. She was a founding board member of Cornerstone Ministries in Dunbar, founded Second Chance Boutique on U.S. 41 and has supported PACE Center for Girls in many capacities, along with many other charities. She also serves on the board of directors of Lee University in Tennessee.

• The late Lalai Sapp Hamric of Fort Myers was the former president and CEO of Family Health Centers of Southwest Florida, a position she held until her retirement in 2009. Under her guidance, the non-profit grew to 14 medical offices, a women's health center and seven dental offices, setting a path for its future. Hamric was honored as one of Southwest Florida's 125 most influential people by *The News-Press* in 2009 and earned a roomful of awards for her work. She also was instrumental in establishing The Angel program of the Women's Legacy Fund and was a founder of the Women's Foundation of Southwest Florida.

• Beverly McNew, 79, of Fort Myers has experienced both triumph and tragedy throughout her life. She was a strong supporter of her late husband, Quinton, and his partner, Dan Harper, in establishing their business, Harper Bros., Inc., which built many roads and subdivisions in Southwest Florida. Tragedy came with the loss of two children – son Griffin in an accident and daughter Laurel Dawn, who died of cystic fibrosis. As a result, McNew established a respiratory school at Florida SouthWestern State College and helped establish the respiratory care clinic at the Golisano Children's Hospital. The Quinton B. and Beverly H. McNew Foundation also awards grants to numerous charities.

The Grande Dames Tea honoring the three women will take place on Tuesday, March 14 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre, located at 1380 Colonial Boulevard in Fort Myers.

Chair of the Grande Dames Tea is Nancy Finch, with Kathy Toll serving as

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Opening Reception At Rauschenberg Gallery

Florida SouthWestern State College will open the exhibit Ann Hamilton: Phora at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery, with a public reception on Friday, January 20 from 6 to 8 p.m.

Occupying the walls (nearly floor-to-ceiling) with more than 120 unique stills captured by the artist from close-up video taken of the mouths of carved medieval figures at the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm, the silent, non-sentient but color-saturated facial features appear reanimated by this immersive installation of digital images.

Initially conceived for the architectural context of La Maison Rouge in Paris, France, and inspired by two highly-symbolic locales: the Bastille (as the voice of civic demonstration) and the Bastille Opera (as a demonstrative public voice), the Ann Hamilton: Phora exhibit explores the origins of public speaking from the first forums to ongoing political debate, and is opening on the day of the U.S. Presidential Inauguration.

Presented for the first time with The First Line (Sounds for Drawing), an experimental drawing project and participatory installation by Ann Hamilton and Andrew Deutsch, this component encourages visitors to take a hands-on role by contributing their own drawing in response to audio tracks played through a headset while a newly-commissioned composition featuring micro-loops of the artist's voice is played aloud in the gallery to provide further inspiration and a soundtrack both for The First Line and Phora.

Hamilton was recipient of the prestigious MacArthur Genius Award Fellowship and a NEA National Medal of Arts Award (presented at the White House by President Barack Obama in 2015). She has been the subject of solo exhibitions and large-scale installations at institutions including The Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, the Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC and the Musée d'art Contemporain in Lyon, France.

The Robert Rauschenberg Gallery is located on the campus of Florida SouthWestern State College, 8099 College Parkway in Fort Myers. For more information, call 489-9313 or visit www.RauschenbergGallery.com.

Playwright group, back from left, Bob Hilliard, Louise Wigglesworth, John Repa, Stephen Hooper and Bob Maxeiner. Seated from left, Faye Graetz and Wally Kain

photo courtesy Alliance for the Arts

Play Reading Series Opens Next Week At Theatre Conspiracy

Theatre Conspiracy will launch a Play Reading Series beginning Monday, January 23 at 8 p.m. This series will highlight the work of six local playwrights. Readings will be presented in the Foulds Theatre at the Alliance for the Arts.

Theatre Conspiracy's playwright group is made of playwrights from across

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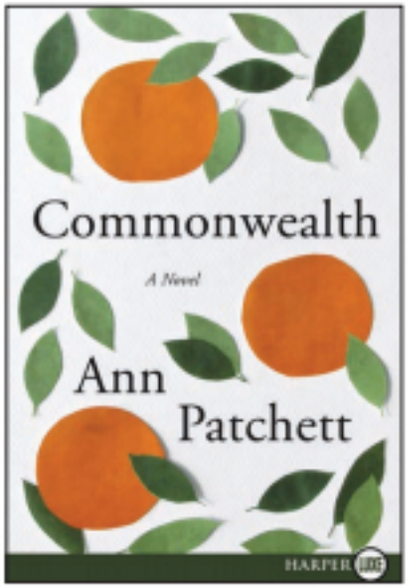
Commonwealth

by Di Saggau

The latest novel by Ann Patchett begins in the early 1960s at a christening party for Franny, the daughter of Beverly and Fix Keating. Bert Cousins, a Los Angeles lawyer, crashes the party with a large bottle of gin. Fix is a local cop and they barely know each other. Bert wants to escape a home with three small children and another on the way. With the help of his gin, everyone gets drunk and a lot of lives are changed.

As the afternoon wears on, we move among the crowd, spying guests and catching snippets of their conversation.



The scene is heavy with implications that will affect two families for the next half century. Bert kisses the beautiful Beverly, an affair begins, and eventually they leave their spouses, marry and move to Virginia, where their six combined children visit each summer.

Over the next five decades, we watch life unfold between all these characters. Franny in her 20s begins an affair with a renowned novelist, a much older man, Leon Posen. She tells him stories of her childhood and that inspires him to write a bestselling comeback novel, also entitled *Commonwealth*. The secrets in the book have a great impact on the stories of the ten characters in the book, the six Keating-Cousins children and their four parents. It forces them to come to terms with their losses, their guilt, and the deeply loyal connection they feel for one another.

I love the way Patchett describes the relationships. For example: "Franny and Bert got along, even when Bert and Beverly no longer got along, even though Caroline and Bert had never gotten along." In spite of the seriousness of the relationships, there is a sense of humor throughout the book. It's not all heartbreak. It's a meditation on inspiration, interpretation and the ownership of stories.

The youngest of the six children, Albie Cousins is shrouded in a mystery and for much of the story we don't know what's happened to him. Nor do we know what caused the death of one of the children. About two-thirds of the way through, the whole tragic power of her story hits the reader and the result is breathtaking. The novel brings entire relationships alive. It took me awhile to keep all the characters straight and the book switches back and forth in time, but it is done in a very readable fashion. It's as if we are listening in from another room.

Commonwealth is a brilliant and tender tale of the far-reaching ties of love and responsibility that bind us together.✲

School Smart

by Shelley M. Greggs, NCSP

Dear Readers, This is typically the time of year when children may be referred for a special education evaluation. Many parents find themselves filled with mixed emotions once their child has been referred for an evaluation. There is fear that their child may have a disability, relief that the child's difficulties may be due to a disability, hope that answers are going to be found to solve the problem, and often just a lot of anxiety.

Frequently, parents find themselves confused and overwhelmed with this evaluation process. Many parents do not fully understand what happens after the referral; they may get intimidated, or have different expectations. So over the next several columns, I will be outlining in general a special education evaluation and providing clarifying information navigate the process.

It is important to note that schools systems will vary to some degree. If you have specific questions about the process in your school system, ask your school psychologist, teacher or principal. Parents have every right to ask questions and usually school personnel are happy to help make this process more coherent for you. It is important for parents to understand their rights during the special education process.

This column will address how a referral is developed. Typically, it begins with an Intervention Team Meeting where a child's teacher presents her student with needs to a special team of educators and specialists. The teacher will present data in regard to what she has done to assist the child. The team then develops additional interventions, implements them and returns to discuss the results at a specific time. Upon reexamination and discussion of the data collected, a student is suspected of having a disability if the interventions attempted have not produced the desired educational outcomes. A referral is then made to evaluate him or her for special education testing. Parents are included in all of these meetings and must agree to the evaluation. Once the parents sign the consent to evaluate forms, timelines begin and the schools have a set amount of time to complete the assessments and hold the eligibility meeting. States differ in this timeline, but it is usually 60 to 65 days.

During these 65 days, several testing components will be completed with you and your child. The evaluators will write reports and a copy will be given to parents at the eligibility meeting. However, schools are required to have a copy available for parents to pick up two days before the eligibility meeting. It is advised, that parents take advantage of this and read reports before the meeting to help get familiar with the information and to formulate questions. The reports hold a lot of information that can be overwhelming if you are not familiar with this type of testing. Ask for help to understand the testing results.

You may also want to bring a friend or advocate to the meeting with you to better help you understand testing results and subsequent decisions. It's best to have read all the reports, develop any questions you may have and be prepared. The purpose of the eligibility meeting is to determine whether or not your child has an educational handicapping condition and if s/he is eligible for special education services.

My column next week will help you to understand what is meant by the determination and label of an educational handicapping condition and what is the result of being found eligible or ineligible for Special Education Services.

Shelley Greggs is adjunct faculty at Florida SouthWestern State College, where she teaches psychology and education courses. She is also a nationally certified school psychologist and consultant for School Consultation Services, a private educational consulting company. Questions for publication may be addressed to smgreggs@gmail.com. Not all questions submitted can be addressed through this publication.✲

Reading Festival Returns March 18

More than two dozen nationally acclaimed authors plan to meet their fans and talk about their books at the 18th annual Southwest Florida Reading Festival on Saturday, March 18 at Centennial Park in the Fort Myers River District.

The festival is a free, day-long event filled with sensational author talks, the latest library technology, contests, booksellers, book signings, activities for teens and children, a free book for every child and teen and the Reading Rocks! Teen Battle of the Bands. The Festival draws an average of 18,000 people annually. The Reading Festival is the largest one-day reading festival in Florida and runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., rain or shine.

"Authors come from all over the country and many genres are represented," said Margie Byers, Festival Coordinator. "Most are award winners, a couple are coauthors with Tom Clancy and James Patterson and all are very popular with their readers. It is a pleasure to meet these creative and interesting people who write these amazing novels and keep track of all the details."

The festival starts Friday evening, March 17 at the Marina at Edison & Ford with the Evening with the Authors. The event provides the opportunity for fans to meet, mingle and dine with authors. Tickets to the dinner and reception can be purchased online at www.Readfest.org.

A few of the award-winning authors scheduled to attend both events include adult authors Shelley Shepard Gray, James Grippando, Gregg Hurwitz, Mark Greaney, Susan Wiggs and Lori Wilde; teen authors include Sara Shepard, Kami Garcia and S.J. Kincaid; and children's authors Chris Grabenstein, Salina Yoon and Candace Fleming. The complete list of authors can be found at www.readfest.org.

The Reading Festival, presented by the Lee County Library System is free and 100 percent community supported through generous donations, sponsorships and grants. To help ensure the continuation of this free community event, visit www.readfest.org to make a secure online donation. Author information, dates of partner events, directions to the event and more is available for your convenience 24 hours a day at www.readfest.org or call 479-4636.✲

Lakes Regional Library Book Sale

Join your neighbors and friends on Saturday, January 21 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Big Book Sale at the Lakes Regional Library, located at 15290 Bass Road in Fort Myers. Sponsored by the Friends Book Nook, hundreds of gently-used adult fiction, non-fiction, children's books, CDs, DVDs and special interest books will be available for sale, with many current titles and authors available. Prices range from 25 cents to $5.

Admission is free and there will be special deals available. The sale will be staffed with Friends Book Nook volunteers and proceeds will benefit the Lakes Regional Library.✲

New Moon Meditation Class

Enjoy a guided meditation on the beach as the sun sets and the moon rises on Friday, January 27 at 5:15 p.m.

Participants will meet at Alison Hagerup Beach Park, located at 14790 Captiva Drive on Captiva. This beach is labeled "South Beach" or Location #30 on South Seas Island Resort maps.

There is a suggested donation of $10 to $15, and all proceeds will benefit the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation's sea turtle research program. Participants should bring a towel or blanket to sit on.

For more information, visit www.ambuyoga.com or call 314-9642.✲