

Lifestyles

Hobbyists groups kick the cold-weather doldrums: Part One

By Emily Weathers Kennedy

Back in the '80s the theme song for a wildly popular television series called Cheers always made me think of home when I didn't live in Lawrence County. "Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name, and they're always glad you came." You don't have to be a bar regular like the characters on Cheers to appreciate the feeling of being welcome. And, it doesn't take growing up in a place to fit in, like my case after moving home to Loretto. What it takes is a willingness to look around and find people who share similar interests.

Hobbies are my go-to activities to get through inclement weather. All of mine allow quiet time alone on my farm. Yet, sharing them with others encourages and enhances the enjoyment. This article is the first of a two-part series exploring local interest hobbyists who have figured out how to stay motivated when cold weather hits.

Virginia author joins local book club for discussion

For about three years fellow bibliophiles (or book lovers) and I have met at Nana's Pizzeria in Loretto to enjoy a meal and retire to an office upstairs to discuss the latest book chosen and read. From authors Faulkner to Picoult and subjects as diverse as Tennessee dams to British ghosts, discussions can be reserved or animated. Usually, a book regarded as so-so suddenly takes on new life after discussion. I have heard more than one book club member say in amazement, "I didn't like this before but actually do after our discussion!"

In our group, called The Gallery Book Club at Nana's Pizzeria, there are many different tastes, yet we all recognize that every book has an author with a motive for writing, and every book has a plot and characters. Discussing these things gives the book legs, so to speak. Sometimes we leave meetings quite surprised.

For January we were privileged to have join-

ing our discussion Virginia author LB Gschwandtner, who offered to drive down to Nana's the night before her book launching at Parnassus Books in Nashville to discuss her fifth book, *The Other New Girl*, with our book club. It was a delightful discussion indeed.

The *Other New Girl* is a coming-of-age story of a young woman who enters a Quaker boarding school her sophomore year. Author Larry Bloom says, "This is the work of a master storyteller who introduces the reader to well-drawn characters and brings the narrator's moral dilemma to a stunning climax." New York Times best-selling novelist Wally Lamb writes, "The ingredients of this dark and disturbing coming-of-age novel include adolescent cruelty, religious hypocrisy, and the sadder-but-wiser perspective of the adult who dares to look back. Do we ever really get over high school?"

Even as each of us at the discussion recalled memories from our own high school experiences as we read the book, we were more drawn to LB's personal introspection of her characters and their motivations at our meeting. She was open and willing to speak out about her own mother's mental illness, her impressions of Quaker life, and the real people who inspired her characters. Sometimes she would say, "Yes that really happened." Other times she would remove her reading glasses contemplatively and say, "Well, no, I made that up. But it could have happened. This sort of thing went on during those times just like today." One of those was a particularly tantalizing chapter LB read aloud, prompting smiles and more discussion of teenage behavior.

On Sunday at Parnassus, we were delighted to see books we have read at book club arrayed on center aisle tables. But we were even more thrilled to see our guest author's book displayed right in the front window and prominently on the counter, across the counter on a wall display, and on a television in the



Top left: Gallery Book Club member Ron Brown with LB Gschwandtner and fellow members Emily and Kerry Kennedy; top right: Gschwandtner reads at Parnassus Books in Nashville; bottom left: Gschwandtner with Nana's Pizzeria owners Nancy Fleming and Ante Sekelja; bottom right: Gschwandtner discovers her book's prominent display at Parnassus.

store. LB had arrived, and The Gallery Book Club at Nana's Pizzeria had arrived with her as her friendly support.

From Virginia to Loretto to Nashville, people find commonality over books, over life experiences, over a common need to join together to discuss life and love and the essence of what makes us human. If you love books, think of joining a book club to share your interest. You may call the Loretto Public Library or Vicki Beckman at 931-279-0844 to learn more about The Gallery Book Club at Nana's Pizzeria. The Lawrence County Library in Lawrenceburg can give you information about other clubs in the area and has book club sets of books you may borrow if you would like to start your own club.



GALLERY BOOK CLUB MEMEBERS
(top, left to right) Judy Simbeck, Elizabeth Brewer, Vicki Beckman and Judy Landtroop. Pictured, right, are Susanne Reves, Eric Lewis, and Kerry Kennedy.

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