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Wednesday, February 19 • 11:30am–1:00pm
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ReadOut 2020: Why Our Stories Matter
By Laura Mulrooney

Gulfport Library’s LGBTQ Resource Center hosted a three-day lesbian literary event, ReadOut. From Friday, January 31 to Sunday, February 1, hundreds of women and men gathered in the Gulfport Public Library for scheduled talks from authors, panel discussions, workshops and a live stage performance.

The LGBTQ Resource Center at the Gulfport Public Library hosted the third annual ReadOut, Friday, January 31 to Sunday, February 2. ReadOut is a three-day celebration of lesbian literature with scheduled talks from authors, panel discussions, workshops and a live stage performance.

According to organizers, last weekend’s program was a huge success, with full-capacity seating during panel discussions and keynote presentations. The writing workshop sold out, Catherine Hickman Theater was packed to gills and several participants and organizers ventured to say, “Next year we may need a bigger venue.”

The event was anchored by Sheree Greer, this year’s keynote speaker. A Milwaukee native, Greer is a writer and educator living in Tampa. She founded The Kitchen Table Literary Arts Center to showcase and support the work of women writers of color and is the author of two novels.

Twenty other lesbian authors were featured throughout the weekend as well. Each woman shared their own powerful and unique tale and answered questions from an audience of hundreds.

The most pressing question was posed by Keynote Speaker Greer: “What was the first book you read of women loving women? What did you feel when you saw your kind of love in a book?”

Greer shared her answer with the audience: “The Color Purple,” by Alice Walker.

“It was the first book I read that featured two black women in love,” said Greer. “The movie only hints at this love affair, but the book, the scenes of their lovemaking. And the scenes unfold as a beautiful rendering of a woman touching another woman and showing her what pleasure feels like, what care feels like, what love feels like.”

After Greer posed the question, the library went silent as the audience reflected, then a sigh washed over the crowd as memories rushed forward.

“Patience and Sarah,” by Alma Routsong, “Desert of The Heart,” by Jane Rule, and “Edward the Dyke,” by Judy Grahn were just a few titles shared by the audience in response to Greer’s question.

“When she asked us to think about that book, I thought about the book; and then she asked us to think about the feeling, I could remember that feeling. I could bring it up and viscerally, I could feel it in my body. I could transfer that feeling. The book was ‘Patience and Sarah,’” said attendee and organizer Eadie Daly. “When [Greer] talked about transferring the kinds of things we always had to translate from heterosexual love into our own situation of lesbian love – the minute that came into my psyche it totally changed how I viewed myself in the world.”

“Patience and Sarah,” agreed Sandra Weeks. “That one was totally amazing how stubborn the characters were in being true to themselves.”

“The only thing that came up for me was ‘Desert of the Heart,’” responded Len Leeb. “In fact, I call it the ‘lesbian training book.’ I had feelings of joy when I thought about that book.”

One of the anticipated events of the weekend was a stage performance by storytellers Nia and Ness. The black, lesbian, dancer-poet performance duo performed their newest work, “Home,” at the Catherine Hickman Theater, Saturday, February 1, at 8 p.m.

With their artistry, talent, honesty and dedication to feminist values, there’s no way we couldn’t have fallen in love with them,” Daly said during her introduction of the performers. “This is not a sit-back-and-relax kind of story; this is a lean-forward-and-pay-attention kind of story. . . .
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Get Out and Vote: Red or Blue, It’s Up to You!
By Laura Mulrooney

Tuesday afternoon, February 4, the Gulfport Multipurpose Senior Center hosted a voter registration event from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Patty Callaghan, a 12-year employee for the Pinellas County Voter Outreach division, headed the registration event.

“We had a good turn out today; we had several new voters register,” said Callaghan. “A few of those folks were from out of state, so I explained how our primaries work in comparison to other places.”

Callaghan also said that over the past several years, she’s seen a “big increase” in mail-in voting.

“I think it’s a great idea to request a mail-in ballot,” said Callaghan. “You can do your research in advance and not have to stand at the booth for 30 minutes or so deciding what you want to vote for.”

She also recommended mail-in ballots as “a great option for those who have difficulties” getting to a polling center.

“Not just older folks,” said Callaghan, “but those with disabilities and those who may not have the access to transportation.”

According to Callaghan, even if you request a mail-in ballot you can still show up and vote at the polls.

2020 Election Calendar

**Tuesday, March 17** - February 18 Voter Registration Deadline.
Presidential Preference Primary and Municipal Elections.

**Tuesday, August 18** - July 27 Voter Registration Deadline. Primary Election.

**Tuesday, November 3** - October 5 Voter Registration Deadline.
General Election.

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**FRIDAY SEMINARS**
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Local Crime Watch
A sampling of police reports from Jan. 23 to Feb. 1 in Gulfport, St. Pete Beach and South Pasadena.
Source: Pinellas County Crime Viewer and Gulfport Police Department.

Gulfport

1/23 – Overdose in the 5800 block of 13th Avenue South. A resident reported that two males overdosed on an unknown substance in a bedroom at his house and were unresponsive. Officers located the males on the bed and on the floor then administered Narcan to both. After a few minutes both males came back around and were treated by paramedics.

1/24 – Burglary in the 700 block of Gray Street South. A resident reported that two juveniles in sweats with flashlights were caught on a neighbor’s security camera attempting to break into one car and successfully entering another. The only thing taken was a pair of sunglasses.

1/25 – Burglary to a residence in the 2600 block of 49th Street South. A resident reported that a generator and cooler were taken from his shed.

1/26 – Burglary to a vehicle in the 4900 block of Gulfport Boulevard South. A resident reported that he left his trunk unsecured and someone stole a battery jump box out of it.

1/26 – Assist other agency in the 5000 block of 8th Avenue South. Officers were requested to assist the Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office with locating a juvenile suspect in a theft case. Officers were able to locate the suspect and stood by until deputies arrived on scene.

1/27 – Vehicle crash in the 5100 block of Gulfport Boulevard South. A vehicle was attempting to pull into McDonalds and failed to yield to traffic. The vehicle struck another vehicle that was west bound on Gulfport Boulevard. Both vehicles were towed from the scene.

1/28 – Traffic arrest at the corner of 56th Street South and Gulfport Boulevard South. Officer Palazzolo stopped a car for an equipment violation. The driver, Cecelia Smith, had an outstanding Pinellas County traffic warrant. Smith was arrested and transported to the Pinellas County Jail.

1/29 – Burglary to a residence in the 2200 block of Beach Boulevard. A contractor reported that someone has been breaking into the rear door of a house that is vacant at this time. Nothing appeared to have been taken.

1-23 through 1-29 – The marine unit was in operation for approximately 19 hours this week. Sergeant Woodman and Detective Hutsko assisted with Tampa’s Gasparilla celebration.

Burglary – residence
1/29, noon, 3100 block of Clinton Street S
1/29, 2:40 p.m., 1100 block of 51st Street S

Burglary – structure
1/24, 5 p.m., 2600 block of 49th Street S
1/28, 9:30 p.m., 2200 block of Beach Boulevard

Burglary – vehicle
1/23, 3:17 a.m., 700 block of Gray Street S
2/1, midnight, 4600 block of 29th Avenue S
2/1, 4 a.m., 2000 block of 57th Street S

Theft – grand
1/25, 10 p.m., 5400 block of Shore Boulevard

South Pasadena

Battery
1/31, 1:58 p.m., 1500 block of Pasadena Avenue S

Theft – grand
1/29, noon, 1200 block of Pasadena Avenue S
1/29, 4 p.m., 700 block of Pasadena Avenue S

Boca Ciega High Employee Arrested

On Wednesday, February 5, Gulfport Police Department School Resource Officers assigned to Boca Ciega High School were notified of an ongoing incident involving a school board employee and a student, according to police media release.

Upon further investigation, “it was determined that the employee, who works as a plant operator, was in violation of Florida Statute 847.0135, certain uses of computer services or devices prohibited, where he communicated via text messages with a 16-year-old student of Boca Ciega High School, with the apparent intent to seduce, solicit, lure, or entice the student to engage in unlawful sexual conduct,” the release stated.

Police identified the suspect as Malcolm D’Angelo Albury McGruder, 24, of Gulfport.

Police say that the student, who was only described as a 16-year-old female, met the suspect on the school campus in the later part of 2019. Their relationship escalated over the following months “to the point of obvious violation of the above statute.” Police say the suspect had knowledge of the student’s age, and officers obtained sufficient evidence to develop probable cause to make an arrest.
Custom Dolphin, Island, Shelling Boat Tours Emphasize Ecology

By Debbie Wolfe

Salty Water Tours, LLC is a privately owned local boat tour company that specializes in eco-friendly, customized adventures for parties of from two to six guests.

Bring cameras along with pets.

Captain Rob White has more than 20 years of experience and co-owner/tour guide Emily Seibert has been a lifelong environmentalist and is a member of the Coastguard auxiliary. She is also working on completing her captain’s license.

Both make it part of their new business that started on July 1, 2019 to keep up with facts about area water birds and mammals like dolphins, turtles and tortoises so they can share their knowledge with guests in takeaway nuggets.

“We’ve been down to the Dolphin Research Center in Marathon, Florida,” said White. “We want our customers to leave saying, ‘I never knew that.’ That’s why we put a second person on board to provide environmental and eco-friendly education during each tour.”

They also work closely with area rescue groups to help them with birds like pelicans. “A lot of our customers want to know how they can help with rescues,” said White. “People take out $10 or $15 bucks and say, ‘Hey, can you donate this to help save the birds?’ We’re proud of that. We donate 20 to 30 hours a week to saving sea birds like pelicans.”

The duo is planning to add a fifth tour option that will teach guests how to rescue birds trapped in mangroves due to injuries or fishing tackle entanglements. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to area rescue groups, said White.

Currently, four competitively priced tours are offered for private groups ranging in size from two to six guests. The two-hour Sea Hare at $45 per person is a combination of dolphin watching and shelling in shallow water at Shell Island; the one-and-a-half-hour Dolphin Fun at $35 per person emphasizes wildlife viewing from the boat; the four-hour Island Tour at $75 per person gives people a choice of visiting two area islands from the following three keys – Egmont, Shell or Passage; and the one-and-a-half-hour Dolphin Sunset at $45 per person.

Seibert also offers yoga experiences, as requested. “Sea Hare” is the name of their 26-foot catamaran vessel that is equipped with a port-a-potty. “It gives a smooth, quiet ride as it cuts through the waves,” said White. “The low gunnels or sides means it’s also easier to view dolphins that come right up to the sides of the boat then turn on their sides so they can see us. It’s incredible.”

“We provide unique experiences for guests who are locals or tourists,” said White.

Salty Water Tours
727-401-2774
SaltyWaterTours.com
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