Virtual Authors Festival in full swing

Written by Staff Reports
Friday, 21 May 2021 04:17

This year's theme: Visual Storytelling

Libraries across the country were shuttered last March when the COVID-19 pandemic was declared. While the country is gradually reopening, some libraries remain closed due to their state's restrictions.

The Octavia Fellin Public Library, 115 W. Hill Ave., is one of them. In-person visits are still

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temporarily suspended and the library continues to provide curbside checkout services instead.

However, Octavia Fellin has continued to offer events and activities for visitors, albeit virtually through software like Zoom or Facebook Live. This is also where visitors can join their latest month-long event.

The library launched its first Virtual Authors Festival at the beginning of May. Throughout the month, visitors will be able to join virtual talks on storytelling and creativity with 10 artists, 13 authors, seven poets, and other guests according to the OFPL website.

Betty Martin, deputy director for OFPL, said since the library has made its programs accessible online during the pandemic, it made sense to carry that idea over to the festival.

"We hold the Authors Festival biennially and we weren't sure how this year's festival would or should be planned," Martin said May 12. "We decided that the safest method would be virtual. All of the programs and performers for the festival have a story to tell whether it's through art, graffiti, poetry, photography, etc."

As a result, Martin said the theme of this year's festival, "Visual Storytelling," was an ideal fit.

Featured presentations include:

May 22: Photographer Joe Sohm, an American History teacher turned photo-historian. Guests will hear from Sohm on *Visions of America*, an ongoing multimedia project that showcases the American spirit through print and media productions. His work has been published in *National Geographic, Time, The New York Times, The Washington Post,* and *The Wall Street Journal.* He will show his new production on the Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial, featuring modern and vintage footage.

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May 25: An art demonstration with OFPL's Beth Kuiper. After taking time off to study at Cerritos College in Los Angeles, Calif., Kuiper returned to the Gallup area and will be showcasing various art techniques to "convey both storytelling and emotion through abstraction," as well as to help viewers to create their own abstract art at home.

May 29: A creative workshop with the American Institute of Graphic Artists. Various graphic designers, illustrators, and comics creators will elaborate on the processes and methods for translating stories from prose into visuals.

Recordings of these discussions can be viewed on the OFPL Facebook page.

A YEAR LATER

Martin said while the transition to online services was challenging, the OFPL staff did not miss a beat in the past year of the pandemic.

"We immediately created a method for curbside requests, and made all of our regular programs such as Storytime, Crafty Kids, Creative Corner, and Book Club go virtual," Martin said. "We purchased cameras, a tripod, editing software, attended a film class online and created a 'recording studio' in what was once known as the small computer lab.

"We also provide Supply Kits online so library users can request material for some of the programs such as Crafty Kids and they can participate virtually by watching programs while using the supplies in the kits," Martin continued.

Online databases such as Overdrive, Kanopy, Creativebug, and Newsstand have all seen increases in the past year. Martin said these services remain available to OFPL cardholders and the library is not currently charging fines.

For more information on the Virtual Authors Festival, including a full schedule and links

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to recorded and upcoming events, visit https://ofpl.online/authors-festival-2021/.