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Library introduces walking, talking, living breathing books

CANTON, MI—The doctor is checked out at the Canton Public Library. So is the Civil War living historian, the scrapbooker and the homeschooling expert.

Thanks to a new Living Books program offered at the Canton Public Library, patrons can now check out a person with knowledge of, or experience with, a variety of topics for a one-on-one discussion and exchange of ideas. The living books include a doctor of naturopathic medicine, a licensed professional counselor, a Christian seminary student, gardener, and others.

Marcia Barker, program specialist and one of the Living Books organizers, says the goals of the program are to celebrate and promote diversity, encourage understanding and respect, challenge stereotypes and prejudices and have fun learning about each other and sharing personal knowledge.

“The experience can be whatever you make it, which is sort of unique and fun. You can talk to our Civil War Living Historian about what it is like to do reenactments or find out information for a Civil War paper you are doing for school,” says librarian Kim Brandow. “You can talk to the co-president of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) about how you can help your son who has just announced he is gay or simply ask about what transgender means – it is really up to you.”

Additionally, says Lisa Davis-Craig, adult librarian, “Many of the living library books are locals with a great desire to share their expertise and experience, so this project can bring the community together in an interesting way.”

The Living Books program kicks off on Saturday, September 25, 1-3 p.m. with an open house. Meet some of the books online through short videos posted at www.cantonpl.org/livinglibrary.

The Living Books project originated in Denmark in 2000 and spread to 22 countries. People interested in becoming a living book should contact Canton Public Library program specialist Marcia Barker at 734-397-0999.

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