



Report on the One Book Initiative for 2006-2007

"What if everyone was to read the same book at the same time?" South Haven's response to this question was a tremendous outpouring of interest, active participation, and financial support from a wide range of individuals and organizations during January and February 2007 when the community read Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury.

"It was enormously successful and exceeded our expectations," stated advisory committee co-chairpersons, Ann Habicht and Elaine Stephens. South Haven Memorial Library Director Deb Jones reported that several times all 30 copies of the book were checked out at the same time and she had to order more through interlibrary loan. Janice Varney, Executive Dean of Lake Michigan College-South Haven Campus, stated her faculty and staff enthusiastically integrated the book into their classes and programs whenever possible.

The advisory committee would like to thank all the members of the community who made this endeavor such a success. The Friends of the Library, Kiwanis Club, Rotary Club, Scott Club, South Haven Area Resource Council, and Andrea Olsen at State Farm Insurance provided financial support and assisted in encouraging people to read and discuss Fahrenheit 451. Other individual community members also gave financial donations and local businesses displayed One Book, One Community publicity posters and materials. The South Haven Memorial Library and Lake Michigan College were generous with their facilities and staff support.

At the kick-off bonfire, Chief Randy Van Wynen and fire fighters from the South Haven Area Emergency Services contributed to the atmosphere and safety of the event. Jeffery Dick and the First Congregational Church provided hospitality on a cold night, with refreshments donated by the Golden Brown Bakery and Diane Schlanser. Mayor Dorothy Appleyard honored us with a proclamation from the City Council, and presentations by John Gillette and Keith Nelson set the stage for reading the book. Kristina Henry from the high school Key Club contributed symbols of banned books to commemorate, and high school student Ellen Lundgren designed the logo used on the One Book, One Community publications.

Dr. Garyn Roberts, the author's biographer, visited South Haven to share his insights and perspectives on Ray Bradbury and his work. Melanie Marten, assisted by Mr. and Mrs. Marten, organized a welcoming meal for the participants with the generous support of Jon Rupert and Clementine's; and Steve Daughterty from the Old Harbor Inn provided lodging. Dr. Roberts sent a letter afterwards complimenting the community on its involvement and stating, "A real sense of intellectual inquiry defined the people in attendance."

At another community event, LMC faculty members Michelle Stone, Chuck Jordan, Kathy Logsdon and Diane Baker participated in a panel discussion about the impact of the book and provided the audience with an opportunity to share their opinions and viewpoints on Fahrenheit 451 and the freedom to read.

Elaine Fluck sponsored an art contest for students who created posters depicting book censorship, with the support of high school art teacher Lisa Rostar and LMC graphics instructor Brandon Pierce. Andy Edge of Village Market supplied refreshments for the audience to enjoy while watching the film, Fahrenheit 451, with discussion facilitated by LMC instructors, Bonnie and Rich Wozniak. The film was also shown at the Warren Senior Center with discussion facilitated by Carole Hodgman and refreshments provided by Sandi Capps. L.C. Mohr high school drama teacher, David Hughes, helped students Gerald Hopson, Eric Johnson, Ellen Lundgren and Stephanie Fritz prepare a dramatic reading to present during the High School Variety Show.

Throughout the two-month project, Rachel Voschaka at the Chamber of Commerce, Laurie Mills at the RAM Channel, and Becky Burkert at the South Haven Tribune provided invaluable assistance and behind-the-scenes support. The newly formed Film Institute of South Haven with Sharon Mack and Sally Householder helped to publicize the film. Toni Carroll provided webpage publicity.

Already community members are asking, "What book are we reading next year?" The advisory committee is seeking recommendations and is encouraging individuals and book groups to contact the South Haven Memorial Library (637-2403) or email suggestions to Sh1book@yahoo.com.