**Book Discussion Reading 2024**

**January—The Firekeeper’s Daughter, by Angeline Bouley**

Eighteen-year-old Daunis Fontaine has never quite fit in, both in her hometown and on the nearby Ojibwe reservation. She dreams of a fresh start at college, but when family tragedy strikes, Daunis puts her future on hold to look after her fragile mother. The only bright spot is meeting Jamie, the charming new recruit on her brother Levi’s hockey team.

Yet even as Daunis falls for Jamie, she senses the dashing hockey star is hiding something. Everything comes to light when Daunis witnesses a shocking murder, thrusting her into an FBI investigation of a lethal new drug.

Reluctantly, Daunis agrees to go undercover, drawing on her knowledge of chemistry and Ojibwe traditional medicine to track down the source. But the search for truth is more complicated than Daunis imagined, exposing secrets and old scars. At the same time, she grows concerned with an investigation that seems more focused on punishing the offenders than protecting the victims.

Now, as the deceptions—and deaths—keep growing, Daunis must learn what it means to be a strong Anishinaabe kwe (Ojibwe woman) and how far she’ll go for her community, even if it tears apart the only world she’s ever known.

**February--** **Leave the World Behind, by Rumaan Alam**

Amanda and Clay head out to a remote corner of Long Island expecting a vacation: a quiet reprieve from life in New York City, quality time with their teenage son and daughter, and a taste of the good life in the luxurious home they’ve rented for the week. But a late-night knock on the door breaks the spell. Ruth and G. H. are an older couple—it’s their house, and they’ve arrived in a panic. They bring the news that a sudden blackout has swept the city. But in this rural area—with the TV and internet now down, and no cell phone service—it’s hard to know what to believe.

Should Amanda and Clay trust this couple—and vice versa? What happened back in New York? Is the vacation home, isolated from civilization, a truly safe place for their families? And are they safe from one other?

**March--My Mother's Secret: A Novel Based on a True Holocaust Story, by J.L. Witterick**

Franciszka and her daughter, Helena, are simple, ordinary people...until 1939, when the Nazis invade their homeland. Providing shelter to Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland is a death sentence, but Franciszka and Helena do exactly that. In their tiny home in Sokal, they hide a Jewish family in a loft above their pigsty, a Jewish doctor with his wife and son in a makeshift cellar under the kitchen, and a defecting German soldier in the attic—each party completely unknown to the others. For everyone to survive, Franciszka will have to outsmart her neighbors and the German commander.

Told simply and succinctly from four different perspectives—all under one roof—My Mother’s Secret is a testament to the kindness, courage, and generosity of ordinary people who chose to be extraordinary.

**April--Love, Clancy: Diary of a Good Dog, by W. Bruce Cameron**

You’ve probably never met someone like Clancy. He’s keeping a diary, he’s falling in love, there are rivals for his affections, he lives with his best friend and his worst enemy—even taken together, these factors are maybe not that unusual, except that Clancy is a dog. His point of view is therefore perhaps…different

**May--The Book of Otto and Liam, by Paul Griner**

Liam is the boy, lying in the hospital, in grave condition, a bullet lodged in his head. Otto is his father, a commercial artist whose marriage has collapsed in the wake of the disaster. Paul Griner’s brave novel taps directly into the vein of a uniquely American tragedy: the school shooting. We know these grotesque and sorrowful events too well. Thankfully, the characters in this drama are finely drawn human beings—those who gain our empathy, those who commit the unspeakable acts, and those conspiracy fanatics who launch a concerted campaign to convince the world that the shooting was a hoax.

**June--Cicadas Sing of Summer Graves, by Quinn Connor**

At turns haunting and breathtaking, Cicadas Sing of Summer Graves explores legacies of love, family, and the ghostly imprint grief leaves behind as three women face the past to bring light to an old Southern town lost deep beneath the surface.

Years ago, yellow fever gripped the small lakeside town of Prosper, Arkansas. At the height of that summer swelter, in the wake of an unexpected storm, the dam failed and the valley flooded—drowning the town and everyone trapped inside. The secrets of old Prosper drowned with them.

Now, decades later, when a mysterious locked box is pulled from the depths of the lake, three descendants of that long-ago tragedy are hurled into another feverish summer. Cassie: the reclusive sole witness to an impossible horror no one believes. Lark: a wide-eyed dreamer haunted by bizarre visions. June: caught between longing for a fresh start and bearing witness to the ghosts of the past. Bound together, all three must contend with their home’s complex history—and with the ruins of the town lost far beneath the troubled water..

**July--Mercury, by Amy Jo Burns**

It’s 1990 and seventeen-year-old Marley West is blazing into the river valley town of Mercury, Pennsylvania. A perpetual loner, she seeks a place at someone’s table and a family of her own. The first thing she sees when she arrives in town is three men standing on a rooftop. Their silhouettes blot out the sun.

The Joseph brothers become Marley’s whole world before she can blink. Soon, she is young wife to one, The One Who Got Away to another, and adopted mother to them all. As their own mother fades away and their roofing business crumbles under the weight of their unwieldy father’s inflated ego, Marley steps in to shepherd these unruly men. Years later, an eerie discovery in the church attic causes old wounds to resurface and suddenly the family’s survival hangs in the balance. With Marley as their light, the Joseph brothers must decide whether they can save the family they’ve always known—or whether together they can build something stronger in its place.

**August--The Frozen River, by Ariel Lawhon**

Maine, 1789: When the Kennebec River freezes, entombing a man in the ice, Martha Ballard is summoned to examine the body and determine cause of death. As a midwife and healer, she is privy to much of what goes on behind closed doors in Hallowell. Her diary is a record of every birth and death, crime and debacle that unfolds in the close-knit community. Months earlier, Martha documented the details of an alleged rape committed by two of the town’s most respected gentlemen—one of whom has now been found dead in the ice. But when a local physician undermines her conclusion, declaring the death to be an accident, Martha is forced to investigate the shocking murder on her own.

Over the course of one winter, as the trial nears, and whispers and prejudices mount, Martha doggedly pursues the truth. Her diary soon lands at the center of the scandal, implicating those she loves, and compelling Martha to decide where her own loyalties lie. Clever, layered, and subversive, Ariel Lawhon’s newest offering introduces an unsung heroine who refused to accept anything less than justice at a time when women were considered best seen and not heard. The Frozen River is a thrilling, tense, and tender story about a remarkable woman who left an unparalleled legacy yet remains nearly forgotten to this day.

**September--The Five Wishes of Mr. Murray McBride, by Joe Siple**

With all his family and friends gone, one-hundred-year-old Murray McBride is looking for a reason to live. He finds it in Jason Cashman, a ten-year-old boy with a terminal heart defect and a list of five things he wants to do before he dies.

Together, they race against the limited time each has left, ticking off wishes one by one. Along the way, Murray remembers what it's like to be young, and Jason fights for the opportunity to grow old. But when tragedy strikes, their worlds are turned upside-down, and an unexpected gift is the only thing that can make Jason's final wish come true.

**October--In the Time of Our History, by Susanne Pari**

Twelve months after her younger sister Anahita’s death, Mitra Jahani reluctantly returns to her parents’ home in suburban New Jersey to observe the Iranian custom of “The One Year.” Ana is always in Mitra’s heart, though they chose very different paths. While Ana, sweet and dutiful, bowed to their domineering father’s demands and married, Mitra rebelled, and was banished.

Caught in the middle is their mother, Shireen, torn between her fierce love for her surviving daughter and her loyalty to her husband. Yet his callousness even amid shattering loss has compelled her to rethink her own decades of submission. And when Mitra is suddenly forced to confront hard truths about her sister’s life, and the secrets each of them hid to protect others, mother and daughter reach a new understanding—and forge an unexpected path forward.

Alive with the tensions, sacrifices, and joys that thrum within the heart of every family, In the Time of Our History is also laced with the richness of ancient and modern Persian culture and politics, in a tale that is both timeless and profoundly relevant.

**November--Death by Hot Apple Cider, by Alex Erickson**

With autumn in full swing and Thanksgiving on the way, Krissy’s supplying cider and her staff is manning the apple-bobbing booth at a town event. But then a patron dunks his head in—and doesn’t come back up.

It soon becomes clear that Krissy’s brew wasn’t to blame. But with her policeman boyfriend looking to make detective, she can’t help being drawn into the investigation. The victim was notorious for harassing not only her own bookstore but the library and the school for promoting supposedly scandalous literature—before someone censored him permanently. Now, Krissy will have to check out a stack of suspects to find a killer who’s rotten to the core . . .

**December--Jingled and Jangled: A Delightfully Dysfunctional Familial Christmas, by Tiffany Ryan**

Merry Christmas from the Jenkins! A delightfully dysfunctional family that puts the fun in dysfunction.

Tis the season, and with the Christmas holiday fast approaching, and the school semester finally winding down, Olivia Jenkins is looking forward to a little rest and relaxation, her crazy and eccentric mother, Grandma Helen, however, not so much. So now, in addition to already having to deal with frenetic Christmas planning, holiday decorating, and the hassles of everyday life, Olivia is also finding herself having to contend with her mother’s fortuitous, if not slightly self-serving, foray into the adventitious enterprise of charitable giving. After begrudgingly agreeing to help coordinate the holiday charity drive for her local community theater troupe, Helen quickly comes to the realization that acts of benevolence and munificence may just be a wee bit outside her wheelhouse, and rather than suffer through it alone, she hastily enlists the help of her youngest daughter, and the one person willing to humor her many peculiarities and impositions.

Humorously chronicled through the eyes of Addie, the Jenkins sixteen-year-old daughter, Olivia is finding herself once again having to juggle the indulgences of her family, while at the same time, working hard to keep her own sanity intact. Whether having to suffer through a calamitous Walmart shopping excursion, riotous baking fiasco, or administering damage control over a drunken and disorderly Santa, you had better believe that the Jenkins family will have plenty of wine, laughs, and witty repartee to go along with it.