

Sunday with Friends begins at library in Abingdon

The Friends of the Washington County Public Library celebrate the 20th anniversary of the annual Sunday with Friends literary series. The first speaker in the series is Earl Carter, Jan. 21. All talks are held at the Washington County Public Library, Abingdon, Virginia, at 3 p.m.

Carter, area photojournalist, has published a retrospective of his 40-year career, "Appalachian Album." Although he has worked at newspapers in Miami, Florida, and Huntsville, Alabama, he spent most of his career as the chief photographer at the Kingsport Times News. He has provided images to publications and television networks. Carter lectures about his career and shows some of the 224 photographs that document the people and events in Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee during the last half-century: early images of the Carter Fold, June and Johnny Cash, coal country life, floods and natural disasters, and the everyday lives of people.

Joe Reiff speaks Feb. 11. Professor of religion at Emory & Henry College, his book, "Born of Conviction: White Methodists and Mississippi's Closed Society," focuses on the response of the white Mississippi Methodists to the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Twenty-eight ministers signed a statement of their convictions, based on Jesus's teachings to permit "no discrimination of race, color, or creed," in an attempt to lead white Methodists to work for racial justice. The book documents the failures of the group, but also their successes, as the Deep South's massive resistance to segregation began to crack. The book received the 2016 Nonfiction Award from the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters.

Stephen Jett brings the past to life Feb. 25. Retired professor of geography from University of California, Davis, he has written a new book, "Ancient Ocean Crossings: Reconsidering the Case of Contacts with the Pre-Columbian Americas." It paints a compelling picture of pre-Columbian cultures and Old World civilizations that, contrary to popular belief, were not isolated from one another. Jett suggests that many ancient peoples had both the seafaring capabilities and the motives to cross the oceans, and, in fact, did so repeatedly and with great impact. The book synthesizes ideas from archaeology, geography, linguistics, climatology, oceanology and history of navigation to make his compelling case. Jett has also

published several books on Navaho architecture, place-names and culture.

Janisse Ray returns to the series March 11. Ray is one of America's finest environmental writers and reads from new work, sharing the podium with her friend Holly Haworth. She is the author of the memoir "Ecology of a Cracker Childhood" and several volumes of non-fiction. This spring she is the Louis Rubin Visiting Writer at Hollins University. Ray writes about longleaf pines, rural community, seeds, climate, bogs and healing. Haworth is an East Tennessee native. Her works have appeared in the Oxford American, Orion and the Virginia Quarterly Review. She has reported on mushroom foraging, ancient fossils, native mussels, cricket song and long-distance train rides. She received the Middlebury Fellowship in environmental journalism.

Colette Burson talks about her new film April 8. Burson is an Abingdon native who made a feature film, "Permanent," based on her memories of growing up in Abingdon. The film stars Academy-Award winner Patricia Arquette, Rainn Wilson and Kira McLean. It's the 1980s, "perms" are all the rage, and 13-year-old Aurelie dreams about getting one to fit into her new school. However, when her clueless parents take her to a hairdressing academy to save a few dollars, things go incredibly wrong. The film is about adolescence, socially awkward family members, and "bad hair." Burson is the award-winning writer/director of the HBO series, "Hung," which ran for three seasons, as well as an earlier feature film, "Coming Soon."

Wiley Cash speaks April 29. Cash is one of the most acclaimed of young Appalachian writers. His new novel is "The Last Ballad." Set in the Appalachian foothills of North Carolina in 1929 and inspired by actual events, the book chronicles a single mother's desperate struggle for her rights in a textile mill. Lyrical, heartbreaking and haunting, it is a moving tale of courage in the face of oppression. Lee Smith said that the book is amazingly relevant for today's world, when workers' rights are besieged, as they haven't been since the Great Depression. Cash is a writer-in-residence at UNC-Asheville and is the author of two earlier novels, "A Land More Kind Than Home" and "The Dark Road of Mercy."

Rita Quillen and other poets join in a celebration of regional poetry



Stephen Jett



Janisse Ray



Colette Burson



Wiley Cash

May 20. Quillen is one of the region's finest poets. Her new volume, "The Mad Farmer's Wife," is a response to a life lived on a mountain cattle farm in Southwest Virginia and also to a poetic persona created by noted Kentucky poet and essayist Wendell Berry more than 30 years ago: the Mad Farmer. In a world increasingly detached from the land that supplies all our essential resources, Quillen's poetry tries to help us understand the complexity and challenge of living a rural life in today's

economy and the dark life-and-death struggles that are a routine part of farm living. She is joined at this event by other poets from the Appalachian Center for Poets and Writers.

The Friends of the Washington County Public Library sponsor the "Sunday with Friends" literary series. All events are free and open to the public. They include receptions, book sales and signings. For more information, call 276-676-6298 or visit www.wcpl.net. A!