

Book ‘nibbles’ blog is not fiction

By
Judy Hoyle
IVN Contributing Writer

Anita Savio loves reading a good book and then discussing it with others.

“Not long after I moved to the Illinois Valley, I started a short-story discussion group, which was intellectually stimulating,” she said.

In addition to writing articles for the *Illinois Valley News* for the past six months, Savio has been writing a blog about the many nonfiction books she reads and recommends.

The blog is devoted to “nonfiction books that are thoughtful and challenging.” The various titles are listed under headings that include language and linguistics, science and technology, society and culture and public policy. Not surprisingly, the blog address is www.brainybooks.org.

Savio emphasizes that her blog has a “.org” and not a “.com” address.

“The dot-com was already taken,” she said.

Savio’s blog grew out of her experience with acquiring her first Kindle e-reader. She enjoyed the instant gratification of simply typing a title into the device and immediately having the “book” in her hands. Each time she finished a book, Kindle would offer suggestions about other books she might find interesting. That led to her reading many more books.

“I didn’t have enough opportunities to discuss the ideas with other people, so I decided to start the blog,” Savio said. “Whether or not others are reading the blog, there’s a certain satisfaction with writing it.”

She says her posts are not so much book reviews as they are “book nibbles.”

“I’m saying, ‘Here are key ideas in this book.’ So even if the reader doesn’t choose to read the book, they’ll be exposed to the ideas,” she said.

Each post features a lively and readable presentation about one or more ideas or elements from a book she’s read. A book may merit only one post or more than three, depending on the number of ideas she finds compelling.

“I try to choose books that challenge my

knowledge horizons, including books that may challenge my currently held beliefs and I urge others to do the same,” she said. “Even if the writers of these books have a point of view that’s very different from yours, by being open to what they have to say, you can become exposed to new and valuable ideas.”

Savio has enjoyed a variety of careers in her life, working primarily in the nonprofit sector. She also lived and worked as a writer in Mexico. She wrote articles for *The News*, the largest English language newspaper in Latin America at the time, as well as freelance writing for some business and other magazines.

She says she enjoys writing for the *Illinois Valley News*.

“I get to meet interesting people and write interesting stories,” she said.

She’s now working on search engine optimization for the blog, selecting more keywords that people are already looking up online. Google also offers a site with potential keywords that might bring more traffic to her site.

Savio invites others to post on the blog and

will accept any thoughtful review or post on any area of nonfiction, not necessarily addressing the topics she’s selected.

“The writing I do on my blog is intended to be lively and a fun read,” she said. “I include images in my posts, which allow the reader an opportunity to rest the eye, and they’re fun to look at too.”

Some of the photos are visual puns.

“One book I was writing about involved a “FONZIE” environmental review. So I included a photo of Fonzie from the *Happy Days* TV series,” she said.

A recent post discusses the book “With Charity for All – Why Charities are Failing.”

“I urge anyone who donates to nonprofits to read my posts on that book,” Savio said. “There are a lot of problems with the nonprofit sector, so if you donate, don’t do it with your eyes closed.”

Another series of posts deal with books on autism and vaccines and a series on GMOs.

“I think it’s worth taking a look at the posts if you’re interested in these topics,” she said.

Library volunteers keep library running

By
Cilicia Philemon
IVN Contributing Writer

“I cannot live without books.” Thomas Jefferson one of America’s founding fathers once said. Libraries have a longstanding and rich history in America. Benjamin Franklin, another great founding father conceived of the concept of a public library for one and all. Franklin established the Library Company of Philadelphia in 1731. It was America’s first lending library and was the forerunner of the free public library.

As most people in the Illinois Valley know, the Josephine County Library System lost county government funding and sadly closed their doors on May 17, 2007.

The community pulled together and four months later formed Josephine County Libraries, Inc., a nongovernmental and nonprofit organization dedicated to ensure long-term library services for every Josephine county resident. By December 2009, all four library locations were reopened. It was a proud moment of accomplishment.

Now our library is a nonprofit nongovernmental library system

known as Josephine Community Libraries, Inc. It is a privately run public library that relies on contributions for funding as well as a large and varied volunteer force to staff operations and support functions.

The mission of Josephine Community Libraries is to ensure long-term operations of a public library system serving Josephine County, while adhering to its core values of integrity and accountability. There are over 350 volunteers annually. Library usage is heavy. Each month in 2013 saw 24,623 items checked out to about 2,484 library cardholders. Through each month in 2013, about 2,000 patrons came to use the libraries’ computers to access the Internet, use the online reference resources, or pick up the high-speed Internet wireless service.

The library has two paid employees. The rest are volunteers and there are usually about 22 people working monthly. A few of these people have shared their reasons for their service with the library.

Caroline Griffith started out here as a volunteer in January of 2013. She says, “My partner and I had just moved to the Valley and I was excited to discover that our

library needed volunteers. I had been volunteering for about 9 months when the Library Assistant position became available. I think that I have the best job in the Valley.”

Griffith enlarges, “My main responsibility at the library is volunteer coordination. As volunteer coordinator I work to recruit, train and schedule volunteers. I spend a lot of time talking with library patrons and when I encounter a particularly passionate person, I try to bring them into the fold. Oh, and Bob comes in once a week to clean our bathrooms, for which we are eternally grateful.”

A former Claremont, California resident Linda Naydol, another volunteer, says “Libraries always need help and this library serves the community. It cannot survive without the help of the community. And our Bookstore seems to be a well-kept secret that I wish more people knew about.”

Ryan Forsythe formally of Cleveland, Ohio and now living in O’Brien with his family is a local author whose book is available at our library. He says he volunteers because, “Due to budget issues, our library depends on volunteers. As a writer and reader myself, it’s a great fit to surround myself with the works

of fellow writers.” Forsythe also says that he is surprised that many of the evening programs are not better attended, and he feels people may not be aware of the book readings, story times, community reads, Young Master Gardeners group, film showings, and other evening events offered.

Diane Schofield, formerly of Los Angeles, shelves books. Schofield says, “I volunteer because of my love for books. It’s a good fit for me. But of course, the main reason is to keep our library open and available. It is an important and vital part of the community.” She wants everyone to know that there is a meeting place for community groups outside of regular hours. And she adds that the staff is warm, friendly, always helpful, and just a great bunch of people.

Andrea King works at the front desk. She has lived in Selma for the past 21 years. King volunteers to help offer the riches of life to everyone. She says, “It vexes me that so many life experiences have become elitist.” King also says that the library is a place for exploration!

Bob Clinton, retired from Aero Space and an Illinois Valley resident for the past 30 years takes on the toughest and least glamorous job of

all. He cleans the restroom weekly. Clinton says, “I like to read and I use the library a lot. The volunteers at the library are sweethearts and I feel honored to be part of their success.”

Carla is from New Mexico and has lived in the Illinois Valley for a year and a half. She first volunteered because she was unemployed. She has a job now, but still makes time to volunteer at the library because it is something she enjoys. Carla says, “I have always loved libraries and it feels good to be part of an organization that was formed by people who felt passionate about reopening the library.” She wants people to know that the library is a great place to spend a rainy day.

High school senior Kira Newton volunteers at the library because of her love of books. She says she is a person who is happier volunteering, especially at the library. She states, “I believe some people might not realize that the library has history, fantasy and mystery books, among many others, along with Wi-Fi network, and nine computers here; we are more up-to-date than people might think.”

Newton also says, “We need your help. Volunteer for us!!! We need more awesome people working with us!”



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