

## Super Thin Black Dental Floss

Pre-cut and individually wrapped

Great when you're on the go...



1.800.331.4645  
www.buypoh.com



## What's Bugging You? **RIDDLED WITH LIFE: FRIENDLY WORMS, LADYBUG SEX, AND THE PARASITES THAT MAKE US WHO WE ARE**

by Marlene Zuk. HARCOURT, 2007. HARDCOVER, \$25.

Marlene Zuk, an evolutionary biologist and noted science writer, gives new meaning to the phrase "invading your personal space." In *Riddled With Life*, she elucidates the astonishing number of ways in which humans coexist with parasites and bacteria and corrects the thinking that "bacteria are bad." Human evolution has been influenced and even led by microscopic creatures who evolved along with us and became essential to our existence. In fact, sex itself evolved due to the influence of parasites.

Zuk explains how a child's immune system grows strong through early exposure to germs and common household grime. In an environment that's too clean, a bored immune system has nothing to do but turn on itself, which partially explains the growing incidence of asthma and other autoimmune diseases. I love having ammunition like that when I want to put off mopping and vacuuming!

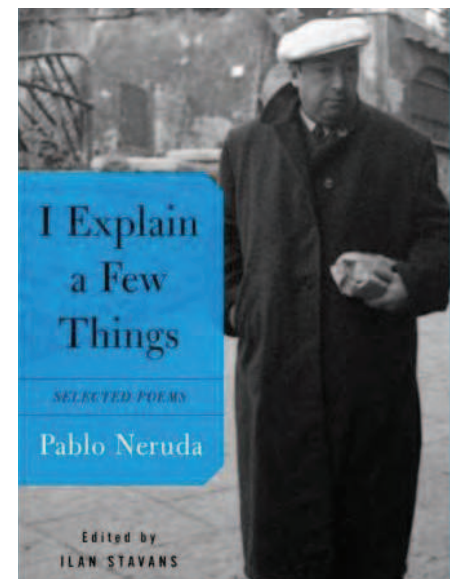
She offers numerous examples of the influence of parasites on genetics, explaining why males of so many species have fancy ornamentation (like a peacock's tail) and also carry more parasites. Or how people with Crohn's disease who were medically treated with whipworm eggs experienced remission of their symptoms. There were so many fascinating examples I couldn't stop reading them out loud to whoever was in the room with me at the time.

While Zuk is extremely apt at writing for the non-scientist, the facts and figures packed into each paragraph at times left me feeling as if I was back in college anticipating a pop quiz. Sadly, most of my college textbooks weren't this interesting.

The organisms that cause disease also contribute to our health in mysterious ways. They are alive, with their own evolutionary agenda, and yet their fates

intertwine with our own. We can never lead bacteria- or parasite-free lives, and we shouldn't even try. — Vanessa Salvia

## poetry



### Chilean Bard

**I EXPLAIN A FEW THINGS: SELECTED POEMS** by Pablo Neruda. Edited by Ilan Stavans. FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX, 2007. PAPERBACK, \$16.

Pablo Neruda's oeuvre gets a close reading by noted Latin American scholar Ilan Stavans, who writes that his objective was to "distill [Neruda's] exuberance to its most essential while producing a book affordable to young people." For students of Spanish language and literature, *I Explain a Few Things* offers the appeal of being a bilingual edition, but it can be appreciated by a wide range of passionate readers.

From 1924's *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* through 1973's *Winter Garden*, Stavans cherry-picks poems from Neruda's canon with an eye for what he describes as the poet's "ideological odyssey." Bearing witness to the greatest upheavals in the 20th century should make for an opinionated pundit, and Neruda certainly knows his enemies (Franco, Pinochet, Nixon) from his compadres (Stalin, Castro, Allende). But Neruda was never programmatic, preferring odes to edicts, senses to scripts. "I am a pale and artless poet," Neruda humorously noted in "The Great Urinator," "not here to work out riddles / or recommend special umbrellas."

His early powerhouse "Tonight I Can Write" succinctly sums up in one line ("Love is so short, forgetting is so long") the romantic trappings of memory and lost loves. But, for Neruda, there were topics greater than love. The titular poem carefully explains his mid-career shift from aesthetic poems to social justice poems. Answering his own rhetorical question on why he won't write about dreams or the fruit of his motherland, Neruda writes in repeated refrains: "Come and see the blood in the streets."

In "Ode to Salt," Neruda takes kitchen sink liberals to task. "In the salt mines / I saw the salt / in this shaker," he writes, noting that solidarity with the workers must extend beyond the breakfast table. When he writes "I too knew homelessness" in the poem, "The Saddest Century," Neruda is speaking of exile, not vagrancy, but both, he implies, are born from the same evils. — Chuck Adams

## Need a little help with a **big** idea for your neighborhood?



The City of Eugene's **Neighborhood Matching Grants** program is accepting proposals for community improvement projects such as parks, playgrounds, gardens or events. Your neighbors and sponsors provide half of the cash/materials/labor and the City will match it.

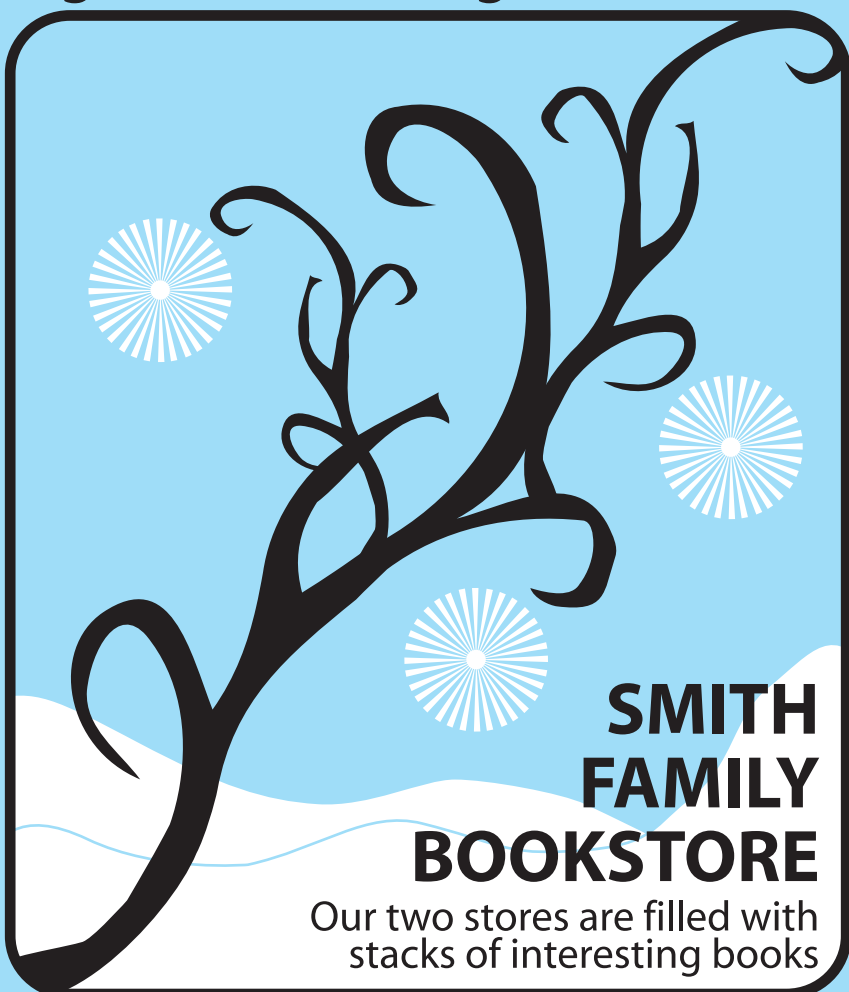


Pre-review deadline for all applicants is **February 25, 2008.**

Grant packets are now available at [www.eugene-or.gov/matching-grants](http://www.eugene-or.gov/matching-grants), at City libraries, community centers, and the Atrium Building at 99 W. 10th Ave.

**Want to learn more? Contact Michael Kinnison, City Neighborhood Services, at 682-5009 with additional questions.**

## Simple Giving... A good book or a gift certificate



## SMITH FAMILY BOOKSTORE

Our two stores are filled with stacks of interesting books

Campus  
768 East 13th

Downtown  
525 Willamette

a proud member of Unique Eugene

### **THE ZOOKEEPER'S WIFE: A WAR STORY**, nonfiction by Diane Ackerman. W.W. NORTON & COMPANY.

2007. HARDBACK, \$24.95.

Diane Ackerman (*A Natural History of the Senses*) is famous enough that she can pretty much write whatever she wants. In *Zookeeper's Wife*, she has a perfect opportunity to recreate the largely unknown (to Americans) world of wartime Warsaw, the fear and anguish and suffering of those trying to resist the Nazis, the courage of the family running the Warsaw Zoo, where hundreds of Jews escaped the death camps. Yet her writing skills don't lend themselves to reconstruction, and her clumsy attempts don't come off well, to put it mildly (a class in the UO's Literary Nonfiction program might be called for, methinks). Luckily, the story she has to tell, and the details with which she tells it, compel attention anyway.

— Suzi Steffen