

Best 'coming of age' middle grade novels

BY ERICKA BRUNSON-ROCHETTE

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Middle grade novels often include stories or lessons that speak to how challenging it can be to find your place in the world during a time of significant change.

Coming of age stories are some of my favorite, because while we all may navigate adolescence and life differently, it's a journey we all have to take. Some of these stories can be inspiring while others can be a little messy, but there is no right or perfect path for self-discovery.

These are some of my favorite recently published coming of age middle grade novels, for anyone who is



Brunson-Rochette

still on the journey of finding their place and discovering their true self:

"Northwind" by Gary Paulsen

In this last book written by this beloved author, Paulsen crafts another captivating story of wilderness, adventure and survival. Set centuries ago, a young waif named Leif is forced to abandon his small fishing camp when a deadly plague starts taking the lives of all the elders around him. And soon the youth, as well.

Setting off on the sea in a small canoe, Leif carries with him only a few memories and an elder's dying message to never return. Having never truly been on his own, Leif must learn quickly how to not only survive on the sea, but to establish a new life by way of water and hope. With a unique and almost melodic writing

style, Northwind perfectly weaves together the story of a young person's journey to find harmony and place in the midst of literal sea of grief, fear and endless danger.

"Jennifer Chan is Not Alone" by Tae Keller

Do you believe in aliens? Do you believe that there is something else out there, something that can't be explained? Jennifer Chan does, and to her neighbor and schoolmate Mallory Moss, that is a problem.

Mallory always tries to follow the rules of middle school, which thanks to her best friend Rachel, she knows means that who you are is determined by what everyone else thinks of you. So when Jennifer Chan moved to town and started to talk about aliens, Mallory knew that wasn't going to make a great impression.

But what Mallory didn't know was the lengths she would go to make sure that everyone else's perception of her didn't change, even if it was at the expense of her new neighbor. Keller, Newbery Medal winning author of "When You Trap a Tiger," delivers another heartfelt and honest coming of age story of an imperfect young girl trying to find her place in the world, and room in her heart for others and for herself.

"Anybody Here Seen Frenchie?" by Leslie Connor

Frenchie Livernois does not talk, but for his best friend Aurora that is not a problem. In fact, talkative and expressive Aurora, who often has a hard time controlling her outbursts, seemingly talks enough for the both of them. These friends have established their own, unique way of communicating, and it has worked perfectly for the two of them since they met in third grade.

At the start of the new school year, Aurora and Frenchie are placed in different classrooms, and everything begins to change. Eleven-year-old Aurora is focused on expanding her social circle and giving her attention to her new friends, which means that she has less time for Frenchie.

When Frenchie doesn't show up to his class one morning, Aurora feels like it's her fault since she can't remember walking him to class like she does every morning. Told through multiple perspectives and intersecting storylines, this endearing tale of friendship, neurodiversity and growing-up, skillfully fits together pieces of the puzzle of what happened to Frenchie.

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FLASHBACK

Alfalfa moonshiners busted during Prohibition

The Spokesman

100 YEARS AGO

June 15, 1922 — Big haul made at Alfalfa of moonshiners

Four stills confiscated, approximately 10 gallons of moonshine seized, two arrests made and more likely to follow — these were the results of a series of raids conducted in the Alfalfa section Tuesday afternoon by sheriff S.E. Roberts, Deputy George Stokoe and Special Officer L.A. W. Nixon. All this is to say nothing of barrels of mash, and bottles and jugs by the gross which were destroyed.

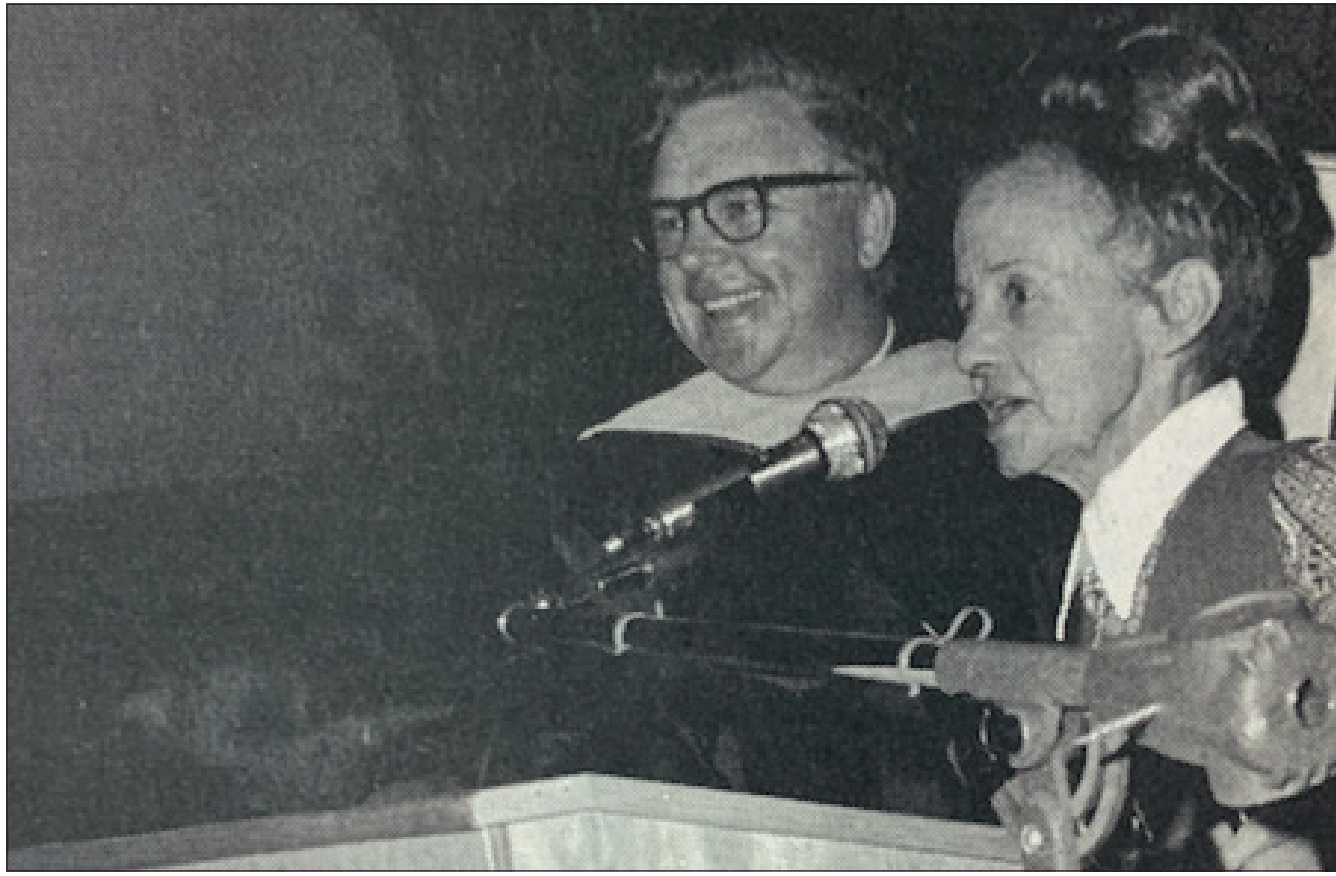
By the time officers arrived at the second plant, near the old Beebe ranch farther on in the irrigated district, they followed Vail Taylor and Frank Lowell busily engaged and moving the equipment.

Taylor and Lowell reached their car with a load from the plant to find sheriff Roberts standing near the machine quietly watching them. They admitted they had been warned by telephone.

75 YEARS AGO

June 19, 1947 — Mayor Elliot goes to hospital

Mayor Jack Elliot, suffering a leg infection, is in St. Charles hospital in Bend under the care of Dr. Raymond F. Jones. Although his condition is not critical, he may be in the hospital several weeks. He left



Former Spokesman publisher Mary E. Brown accepts a Distinguished Service Award from Central Oregon Community College president Frederick H. Boyle at the college's Friday evening commencement.

Tuesday afternoon and underwent an operation Wednesday morning.

City affairs have been turned over to Fred Rodecker, president of the council, who will be acting there in Elliot's absence.

50 YEARS AGO

June 14, 1972 — Sisters names superintendent

Sisters — Dr. Homer N. Kearns Jr. has been named superintendent of Sisters school. Kearns, 29, was associate director of the Northwest Community Education Development Center and assistant professor of education, department of curriculum and instruction, U of O. He was the speaker at a community school presentation and spaghetti dinner earlier this year at the Sisters school.

Former positions include principal of Pinedale Elementary School, Clovis, Calif.; principal of Nelson Elementary School, Clovis, Calif.; lecturer in race relations in Flint, Mich., jail programs; coordinator and consultant, Migrant Teachers Institution, Fresno State College, Calif., and head teacher, Dry Creek Elementary School, Clovis.

Also in the Kearns family are his wife, Patricia, Mark, 8,

and Christopher, 3. Golf, hunting and fishing are favorite free-time activities.

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25 YEARS AGO

June 18, 1997 — School board cuts personal finance requirement

The Redmond School board eliminated personal finance as a high school

graduation requirement Monday, even though the state reached an all-time high in personal bankruptcies in 1996.

Board members voted unanimously to follow a state decision to cut the class from a list of required courses. The high school site council recommended Redmond follow the state's lead, mainly because of the retirement of business teacher Karen Wood.

"We've lost one-third of our business department and we are unable to replace her," high school principal Dan Purple said.

If personal finance were left in the curriculum, teachers from other departments would teach it, limiting the choice of electives.

Board members were leery of cutting a class they believe teaches students important life skills, such as balancing a checkbook and filing tax returns.

"How do we replace the learning those students won't get?" Asked board member Ted Thonstad. "I think there is some valuable information offered in that class."

However, Oregon Schools Superintendent Norma Paulus said last week a failure to teach math adequately was how personal finance classes got started.

"Personal finance has been masquerading as math," she said. "If we get rid of it we can use the resources to teach math."

LOCAL BRIEFING

Redmond Kiwanis Vintner's Tickets Available until July 1

Redmond Kiwanis Club is bringing back its Vintner's Dinner after a two-year hiatus because of the pandemic.

The 16th annual event will be on Friday, July 8, again at Redmond Community Church.

Deadline for purchasing tickets is July 1. Attendance is limited to 180.

The dinner is the service club's largest fundraising event for its youth projects. Every Child Central Oregon, a partner with the state's foster children's program, will be the major beneficiary this year.

The 2019 dinner raised about \$18,000. Club president Josh Werner has set a goal of \$25,000 for the 2022 dinner.

Kiwanis members are seeking items for the oral and silent auction.

Canoe Ridge Winery of Walla Walla will be the presenting winery, and Badger's Kitchen of Powell Butte will prepare the five-course, wine-paired meal.

Tickets are \$95 for individuals and \$1,000 for corporate tables of eight. They are available from Kiwanis

members, at the Redmond Chamber of Commerce and Equine Wine Bar.

The silent auction will be open to everyone as it will go on-line this year following the success of the Kiwanis' R'Oktoberfest in September.

Event-only raffles will be staged exclusively for attendees. An oral auction will also be offered.

In addition to funding such youth projects as the Redmond Learning and Childcare Center and more than \$15,000 in scholarships annually, Redmond Kiwanis also renovated the playground at Sam Johnson Park with the city of Redmond, expending more than \$1 million.

Edward Jones Investments, Josh Werner and Chris Richie are sponsoring the event.

Cascades East Transit resumes Saturday route through Redmond

Starting June 18, Cascades East Transit will resume Saturday service for routes that connect Warm Springs, Madras, Redmond, Prineville and Bend.

CET will also relaunch its popular Ride the River and

Lava Butte summer shuttles starting June 18 through Labor Day, weather permitting.

"We are excited to partner with CET and Tumalo Creek Kayak and Canoe again this summer to operate the Ride the River shuttle," mentioned Julie Brown, Bend Park and Recreation District's Communications and Community Relations Manager.

Ride the River shuttles cost riders \$4 for an all-day wristband and the Lava Butte shuttle charges \$3 per passenger for a round trip. Fares are collected through the UMO Pass Mobile App.

Cash payments are also accepted; however, drivers cannot provide change.

Schedule information for Ride the River, Lava Butte, and Saturday Community Connector Routes 20, 22, 24, and 26 can be accessed at www.CascadesEastTransit.com.

Redmond DMV to close for summer, due to lack of employees

The Oregon DMV said it is temporarily closing 10% of its field offices for the next three months because it doesn't have enough employees to keep them open.

The agency is grappling with a staffing shortage, OPB reports.

To ensure more predictable service, the DMV plans to transfer workers to higher-demand locations, even if that means shutting some less frequented offices entirely in the short term.

The six offices that will close this summer are located in Lebanon, Redmond, Stayton, Sandy, Ashland and Cave Junction.

Another 10 field offices will have reduced hours: Astoria, Canyonville, Downtown Portland, Heppner, Hermiston, Junction City, Klamath Falls, Lake Oswego, Lincoln City and Milton-Freewater.

Windermere to collect donations for food banks Friday

In honor of Windermere's 38th Annual Community Service Day, local real estate brokers from Redmond continued their monthly food drive to benefit the Redmond Food Project and St. Vincent De Paul Food Bank.

On Friday, June 10, Windermere brokers and volunteers from the Redmond Food Project spent

the day filling a freight trailer with recently collected donations at Windermere Central Oregon's Redmond office, 821 SW 6th St., from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. They achieve their goal to have filled the trailer with food by the end of the day.

Established in 1984, Windermere's Community Service Day is a summer tradition in which the company's nearly 300 offices across the Western United States close their doors to allow brokers, managers, owners, and staff to devote their workday to projects that positively impact the neighborhoods where they live and work. The event has been recognized nationally as a model hands-on volunteer program and has been adopted by other real estate companies and businesses around the country.

Redmond Walmart upgrades, donates to local nonprofits

Redmond residents will soon get a look at the newly remodeled Walmart Supercenter.

The store, at 300 NW Oaktree Ln., held a community celebration and ribbon cutting where the Redmond

community heard from employees who have been with the store since it opened in 2017.

In addition, Walmart provided grants to local community organizations. The Redmond Police Department received \$4,500, Central Oregon Autism Movement received \$2,000, Terrebonne Assembly of God received \$1,000, while Deschutes Veterans Services and Redmond Family Bicycle Park received \$500.

The remodel includes expanded parking for online grocery pickup, new signage and wider aisles for easier navigation, new service counters for paint and automotive departments, and a new mural welcoming customers to the store.

The upgrades also complement the measures the company has taken in its U.S. stores to help protect associates and customers from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"Redmond customers will love our store updates as we've made it easier, faster and more enjoyable to find the items they need," store manager Charles Edwards said. "We can't wait for customers to see our updated interior and expanded store offerings."