Tapestry of local voices published in first Writers of Brant anthology

Members of the Writers of Brant, a local group that meets twice monthly at the Burford Library, celebrate the release of their first anthology, Tapestry of Tales & Poetry. The collection showcases the work of 12 local contributors, with proceeds supporting a Paris Lions Club youth scholarship. Pictured left to right are (front row) Lora Karek, Debbie Smith, Cheryl Cudmore, Carol Madou, Agi Albert. Back row Patrick Draper, Kenneth (Lefebvre) Kelbrook, Janet Lopes, John Harvey, Barb Bentham, Suzanne Craig-Whytock. Absent: Viviana Spicer, Lisa Ard.

Casandra Turnbull

Managing Editor

A group of local writers who first came together through a County of Brant Library program are celebrating a major milestone this month with the release of their first published collection, Tapestry of Tales & Poetry – A Collection by the Writers of Brant.

The anthology features fiction, non-fiction and poetry written by 12 contributors from across Brant County, Brantford and Oxford County. It marks the first publication for the group, which formed four years ago through the library's "Brant Writes" program.

"Tapestry of Tales and Poetry is a vibrant collection of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry on a variety of topics, brought together in one volume. There are 12 different local contributors, each with their own voice," said Editor and Publisher Suzanne Craig-Whytock of Baxter House Editions, a division of Darkwinter Press.

What began in 2021 with four participants has grown into a supportive writing circle of about 20 members who meet twice a month at the Burford Library.

“It started in 2021 with just four people and has steadily grown into a community of about 20 members, with new writers joining us all the time,” explained the anthology’s co-ordinator and contributor Cheryl Cudmore.

The group meets on the first and third Thursday of each month, welcoming aspiring, emerging and published writers to share works-in-progress and offer feedback.

“Everyone who attends is invited to read from whatever they’re working on and ask for feedback. Sharing can be intimidating, but the group is very supportive and constructive,” Craig-Whytock said.

Cudmore said she experienced that encouragement firsthand. Two poems she shared during a meeting later earned Honourable Mentions in an Ontario Poetry Society contest. “That’s the kind of affirmation and cheerleading our group offers: a safe place to take risks, and to celebrate each other’s successes,” she said.

Writers were invited to submit both prose and poetry on any topic, with light content guidelines to ensure the book appeals to a wide audience.

As for the authors, Craig-Whytock says readers will find a range of talent and experience. “It’s definitely a real mix. Some have been published before, some are emerging authors, but all of them have a distinct voice and perspective…”

Proceeds from sales of the anthology will support local youth through the Paris Lions Club’s scholarship fund.

“We chose the Paris Lions Club because a donation to them would directly support local youth… it’s very representative of the writing group itself,” said Craig-Whytock.

A public book launch will take place Friday, Nov. 29 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Burford Library Program Room, 24 Park Ave. Attendees can expect author readings, book signings and the chance to meet contributors. A second book launch will take place at Riverside Bookshelf at 32A Dundas St. W in Paris on Sunday, Nov. 30th at 3-5pm.

“All proceeds from sales at this launch, and other future events, will be directed to the Lions Club scholarship program,” Craig-Whytock said.

The group hopes the anthology inspires others to write, and that it serves as a springboard for members to pursue further publishing opportunities.

“We view this anthology as a stepping stone for members towards getting published elsewhere, and to inspire them to keep writing. There’s nothing more motivating than seeing your words come to life this way!” said Craig-Whytock.

For readers, Cudmore said the collection offers “a mix of enjoyment and discovery… something that surprises them, moves them, or lingers with them after they’ve closed the book.”

In another nod to local talent, the artwork on the cover was created by Paris resident, artist and Ward 2 Councillor Steve Howes. “I am honoured to be a small ingredient in this publication,” said Howes, who offered congratulations to the group on the tremendous effort.

The anthology will be available at the launch and at future events, with additional venues being explored. It is also available for purchase on Amazon in both print and Kindle formats.

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