

# CheckItOut!

Spring 2008

**Food,  
Glorious Fooood!**

Newsletter of the Solano County Library, serving the cities of Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun, Vacaville, and Vallejo



**Something  
to Chew On**



**Computer  
Games: At  
the Library?**



**Greatest  
Generation:  
Lena  
Hernandez**





# Making Time for Yourself – and Reading

By Jan Stevens,  
Branch Manager, Vacaville Public Library



Many years ago my middle daughter was showing an acquaintance of hers around our home. She introduced her older sister who was engrossed in a fantasy novel. She passed by the kitchen where I was reading a mystery while trying to cook dinner. She stopped at the family room where her father was

self. As they made their way to her room my daughter's friend whispered agitatedly, "Megan, does everybody in your family READ??" "Sure", said my daughter, "my Mom's a librarian!"

We have chuckled at this exchange many times over the years, but the National Endowment for the Arts released in November 2007 a sequel to its 2004 report, "Reading at Risk", which makes it no laughing matter. This follow-up report finds that a decline in reading for pleasure is linked to flat or declining test scores as children progress from middle to high school. Apparently though, children who often read for fun do better on reading tests than those who hardly ever do so. (I can almost hear you retorting that this is no surprise.)

Also disturbing was the finding that high school seniors

who lived in homes (rich or poor) with ten or fewer books had much lower math scores in 2005 than those who lived in homes (rich or poor) with more than one hundred books.

Adults who read are more likely to volunteer, participate in sports and support the arts. The study suggests that "readers are nearly three times as likely to attend a performing arts event, almost four times as likely to visit an art museum, more than two-and-a-half times as likely to do volunteer or charity work, and over one-and-a-half times as likely to attend or participate in sports activities." Wow!

Now of course whenever you have an issue you can get "experts" to disagree on the veracity, methodology and nuance of a report covering it. And that's true of this report, too. But as you may imagine, librarians are very much in favor of "time spent reading for pleasure". And although I don't have a study to back me up here, I strongly suspect that reading for pleasure is one of those things, like petting a cat or dog, that makes you relax, lowers your blood pressure, and extends your lifespan. Now there's a great payoff!



doing a little armchair seafaring with Alexander Kent. Even her younger sister was happily engaging in thumbing through a well-worn picture book and babbling the story she had heard so often to her-

"I don't have time to read!"

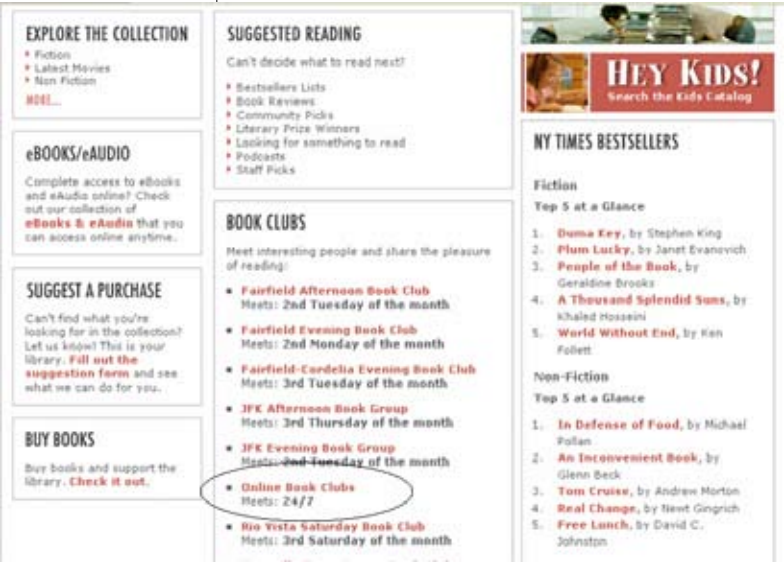
Try listening to books on your commute. You can check out an audio book on CD or download one to your computer or MP3 player.



# What do I Read Next?

Get a daily sample, a monthly recommendation or both!

## The Online Book Club



... gives you the chance to try a book before you borrow it. You'll get samples of books, a bite sized portion every day for a week. It will take you about five minutes a day to try a book in the Online Book Club, and if you like what you read, you can place a hold in the catalog and have it sent to your local library for pickup.

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## Something to Chew On:

### Books that help you decide what to eat

by Janet Snowden, Librarian  
John F. Kennedy Library, Vallejo

One thing we all have in common: we have to eat. But what to eat? Let's assume you are concerned about the rampant increase in obesity, diabetes and heart disease and want to eat in a way that minimizes your chances of having these problems. Simply avoiding overeating is a start. Marion Nestle reports in her book, *What to Eat* that US agribusiness produces 3900 calories of food for each of us every day, about twice what an average person needs. So we are all being urged to eat more than we should, with an excessive number of advertising dollars being spent to get us to eat the less worthwhile items like sugary cereal and soda.

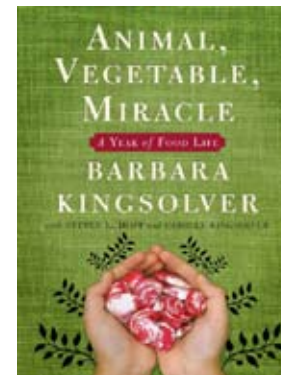
If you worry about these issues, you have to think about how much refined sugar and saturated fat you can eat. Morgan Spurlock took on the question a few years back by using himself in a month-

long experiment of eating only McDonald's meals. In his book, *Don't Eat This Book: Fast Food and the Supersizing of America*, he found that in only a month he went from being healthy and fit to having so many health issues (including serious weight gain) that his doctor urged him to give up the experiment. He clearly demonstrated "fast food" is a choice that has convenience on its side but doesn't make for a good steady diet.

Eric Schlosser takes a deeper look at the societal effects of the fast food industry in *Fast Food Nation: the Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, pointing up ways this industry impacts our health, the economy, politics and food production. He reports that a quarter of the adult population eats a fast food meal every day and that the way we eat has

changed more in the last forty years than in the forty thousand years previously. What is really in our food is something you might want to know about if you care about your health, and also if you care about the larger ramifications of your eating habits.

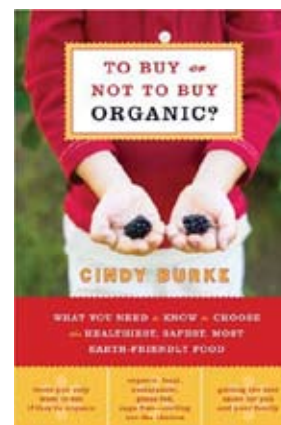
One of the few precepts about diet on which most nutritionists agree is that we should eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. The USDA food pyramid recommendation is for five half-cup servings of vegetables and four servings of fruit every day, so produce becomes an area to look at a little harder. One relatively new choice is whether to buy organic or conventionally grown produce. For guidance in this area, *To Buy or Not to Buy Organic* by Cindy Burke offers information and advice on which kinds of foods may be farmed with lots of pesticides and which seldom require their use. She appends a handy list of further resources with more information on various aspects of food safety.



Another even more recent development is the idea that a great deal of our food dollar goes into the costs of petroleum-based chemicals, certainly for transportation but also in the form of conventional (non-organic) fertilizers. Michael Pollan in the recent *Omnivore's Dilemma* coined the term "locavore" for someone who eats only foods grown within a local area. Exactly how local is open to discussion, but perhaps the closer the better is at least a vague goal to work toward.

Barbara Kingsolver took this idea to heart and wrote about it in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* which describes the year she and her family of four

gardened intensively (really it was pretty close to farming), canned furiously and raised chickens and turkeys for the table, all the while holding down jobs or attending school. It's inspiring that anyone would take this cause to heart so scrupulously. While it is encouraging that it can be done, few of us have the land needed or would be willing to take on the amount of work they put into it. Yet, Kingsolver makes the case that we can certainly buy at farmers' markets or from local producers in or near our own counties and the benefits to our diets and to the folks who are making the effort to grow produce are worth the effort.



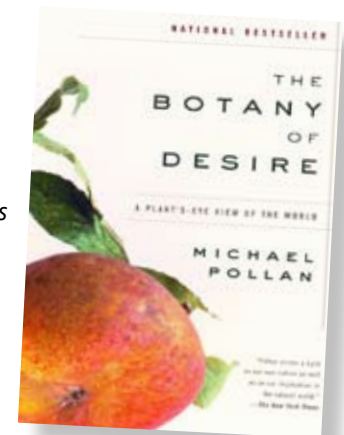
These books and others present the case for choosing food thoughtfully and learning more about where and how it was grown or produced. They question the methods of the agribusiness industry, but they also discuss some of the arguments that are made by these companies regarding the need to produce quantities of food to feed all of us at reasonable cost. For further reading in this area, try some of the following:

*The Botany of Desire*  
by Michael Pollan 306.45

*The Eco-Foods Guide*  
by Cynthia Barstow 641.302

*What's in your Food?*  
*The Truth about Food Additives*  
from Aspartame to Xanthan Gum  
by Bill Statham 641.308

*Food Politics*  
by Marion Nestle 363.85



*Want to read more perspectives on organic farming, pesticides and fast food's contribution to obesity?*

Click the Database tab at [solanolibrary.com](http://solanolibrary.com) and type your search term into the Opposing Viewpoints database. You will find articles that express a diversity of opinion and plenty of "food" for thought.

The Ebscohost research database, in just the Masterfile alone, can also be used to find thousands of articles in hundreds of magazines and journals using search terms such as "genetically modified foods". Scientific, peer-reviewed articles are available in the Academic portion of the database.





Celebrate National Library Week with

# Solano Eats: Delicious Food, Healthy Lives



Kitchen Sisters



**April 15**

Vacaville Performing Arts Theatre

**7-9 pm**

Join the **Kitchen Sisters**, a Peabody award-winning duo, authors and producers of the “Hidden Kitchens” series on National Public Radio, which explores the offbeat, ethnic and eccentric connections between food and culture. This is a fundraiser for Solano County Library Foundation, tickets are \$25-\$35 and available at the box office, 449-6217 or [www.vpat.net](http://www.vpat.net).



## Free Demonstrations and Samples

**We’re Cooking Now! “Iron Chefs”** Does the thought of making dinner send you running out the back door? Join Solano’s own “Iron Chefs” at local libraries for entertaining demonstrations of some easy ways to get dinner on the table that are fast, tasty, inexpensive and more healthful than a trip to the drive-through.

**April 19**

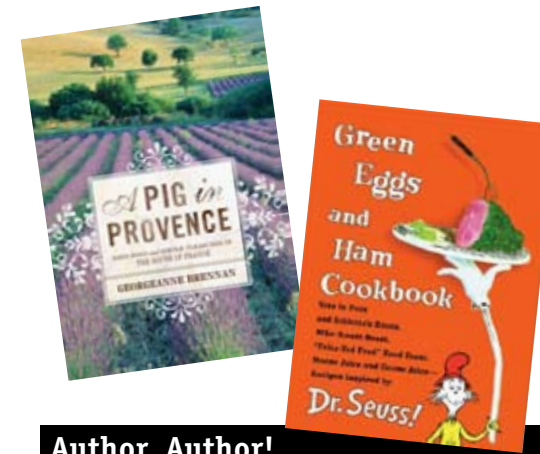
John F. Kennedy Library

**11:30-12:30**

**April 12**

Rio Vista Library

**11-12noon**



**Author, Author!**

Meet **Georgeanne Brennan**, award-winning cookbook author, teacher, journalist and farmer. She’ll share her seasonal approach to preparing simple, delicious food. *A Pig in Provence* and *The Green Eggs and Ham Cookbook* will be available for purchase and signing at each event. All events are free.



**April 19**

John F. Kennedy Library, Vallejo

**10:30-11:30am**

**Visit the  
Vallejo Farmer’s Market**

Combine a trip to the farmer’s market with a visit with Georgeanne at the library! She will be there to talk about her experiences growing and cooking delectable food.

**April 16**

Fairfield-Cordelia Library

**4-5:30pm**

**A book talk and Q&A**

with the author along with appetizers that celebrate the pig. The Suisun Valley Harvest Trail ambassador will be on hand and Oakbrook School will display photographs from their Slow Food project, a feast from the garden.



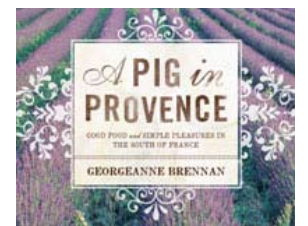
**Writer’s Workshop**

Georgeanne will share her tips on how to incorporate sensory experiences into writing your personal history.

**April 12**

Vacaville Public Library-Cultural Ctr

**10am-Noon**



Georgeanne will visit with the Reporter Book Club and discuss one of her many books, *A Pig in Provence*.

**April 16**

Vacaville Public Library-Cultural Ctr

**7-8 pm**

**Solano Eats: Delicious Food, Healthy Lives**

is brought to you by Solano County Library,  
Solano County Library Foundation, Solano  
County Public Health, Solano Slow Food  
Convivium, University of California Cooperative  
Extension, Solano County, Food Bank of Contra  
Costa and Solano, and The Reporter





# Got a Baby? Get a Book!

at Northern California Kaiser Permanente Pediatric Clinics

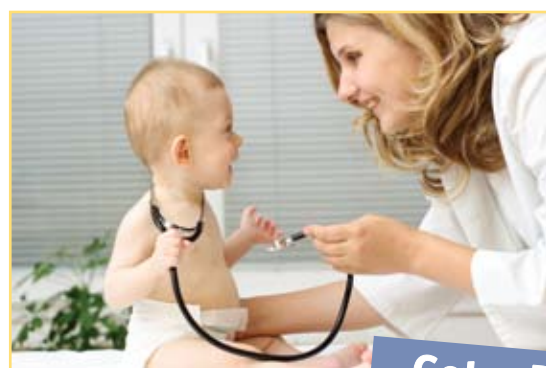
by Wyntress Smith,  
Literacy Program Assistant for Reach Out and Read

When the Solano County Library staff designed a poster, Got a Baby? Get a Book!, to encourage parents to ask their doctors for a book at each well-baby and well-child visit, they were unaware that the phrase would serve as the mantra for Northern California Kaiser Permanente sites. As an ongoing part of pediatric care, parents will receive a new children's book at each well-child visit at all 46 Northern California Kaiser Permanente Pediatric Clinics by the end of the year. The program provides every child, six months through five years of age a new, age appropriate book at each checkup.

The health organization is the largest to adopt a modified version of the national early literacy program *Reach Out and Read (ROR)*. Kaiser Permanente in Southern California began offering a streamlined ROR model providing seven of ten books for patients in 2002. Local ROR supporters appealed to Northern California Kaiser Permanente Regional Administration and Pediatric Chiefs to adopt the program as a standard intervention on the basis that reading to young children improves their physical and emotional development. *Reach Out and Read* studies show that reading aloud to young children stimulates brain development, increases bonding between the parent and child, builds language and literacy skills, and results in school readiness.

Currently, medical sites have children's books burgeoning onto their clinic shelves. In a report by UCLA and ROR, *Reading Across the Nation: A Chartbook*, 45% of parents surveyed in California reported reading to children (ages 0-5) daily. With the action taken by Kaiser Permanente, tens of thousands more parents are going to be reading to young children.

Solano County Kaiser Permanente Pediatrics in Vacaville (2000) and Fairfield (2005) embraced the *Reach Out and Read* program in partnership with Solano County Library. As of 2007, pediatricians at these two sites gave 32,000 books to parents of young children with the majority of the funding coming from the Solano County Library Foundation. Kaiser Permanente Pediatrics in Vallejo collaborated with the library at the start of its program in



2003 and with the library's Foundation.

Teresa Perry, RN, the onsite coordinator for Kaiser Fairfield recalled the days before Kaiser Fairfield had the ROR program. "I remember phoning the library (Literacy Services) for books for parents to read while waiting to be called in for their appointments. Now we have books (for well child visits)! One little girl asked me if she could have a book when I checked her newborn brother."

Teresa has children's books to send home with patients, and there are volunteers to read aloud to families in the bustling pediatric waiting area. At Kaiser Permanente Pediatrics Fairfield and Vacaville, the library continues to offer volunteer opportunities for reading aloud as well as information about other library programs.

## Computer Games - At the Library?

By Kevin Tolley, Library Associate,  
Vacaville Public Library-Town Square

For a long time video games, computer games and other such frivolity have been taboo at public libraries but Solano County Library has a different take on the subject. About a year ago I wrote a proposal for Lynne Williams, Solano County Library's deputy director for support services, aimed at introducing gaming to the library as a program for teens. After much research I asked for Warcraft 3. Warcraft 3 is a fantasy-style game where players build armies and defeat other players. It sounds like Risk really, but what makes it special is that it is played over a Local Area Network or LAN. This means that a lot of computers are hooked together in the same room so everyone can play the same game with the other people in the room. It is commonly referred to as a LAN party.

I had noticed that certain teens could be found for hours every day after school playing Runescape or Adventure Quest or any number of other games on our computers. They came, they played, they left. Some people complained that they were taking up precious bandwidth and slowing the computers down. But it is easy to complain about teens. They have a small voice in our world. And



fortunately, in this case, they were easy to defend.

Most of these kids weren't disruptive. In fact they were among the quietest teenage boys we had. They weren't doing anything wrong either. They were just using the computer in a new and interesting way. They simply saw the library as being more than a place to research and find books.

Solano County Library's mission statement agrees with the teens. We are here not just to provide information, though we do that with delight. We are here to provide entertainment as well. And really, what is a video game but another expression of the need we all have for movies or fantasy fiction.

And so, Lynne Williams agreed wholly with the proposal and we launched the first Solano County Library LAN party. It was a success! I had more kids than I knew what to do with. We had to rotate them onto the computers. We had a room full of happy teenage boys, and some girls too, all using the library without getting in trouble.

"The library  
was suddenly  
fun and on  
their radar."

The word spread and the next LAN party had even more kids. They were more than the usual crowd that came to the library every day to play Runescape. I saw kids I had never seen

that DDR was wildly popular with teens. And why not? Have you ever played them? You should, they are amazingly fun!



before, kids who came specifically for this event. I then began to notice that some of them came back, looking for books. The library was suddenly fun and on their radar.

The games were a winner and Sarah Krygier, the librarian for young adults at the Fairfield Civic Center Library, noticed. She thought we should expand the original idea of Computer LAN parties to include the incredibly popular Dance Dance Revolution (DDR). At the Fairfield library it became quickly apparent

We've added  
Guitar Hero  
and  
Madden  
Football 08  
to the games  
young people  
can play  
at the library!



## Lena Hernandez

By Cayla  
student at Armijo High School

Lena Hernandez was born on February 18, 1926, in Clovis, New Mexico, the only girl out of six children. She grew up in what she described as "hard times," a time where not many jobs were available, especially for women, and kids did not attend school regularly. In Lena's family, only her father worked regularly and, beginning at the age of 12, she and her three oldest brothers would sometimes be taken out of school to go work in cotton fields in Texas. She would sometimes even take her younger brother along to babysit him while they picked cotton.

Just like other members from the Greatest Generation, for Lena there are some events in history that stand out more than others, like the Great Depression. For Lena, there are both good things and bad things that stand out. She and her siblings didn't have to attend school, but they missed out on a lot, and they

didn't have what a lot of other people had. They ended up getting through it just fine though.

During World War II, Lena was more fortunate; she was back in school and had three brothers in the service who all came back unharmed. For Lena, the 40's was a decade highlighted with the music of Tommy Dorsey and Harry James, who performed at USO parties and Air Force bases. It was also when she started her job at the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank, in 1947. A year later, she gave birth to her daughter. Then, three years after that, her son was born. In 1953, she moved to Fairfield to begin working at the Western Union office on Travis Air Force Base.

President John F. Kennedy's assassination is another example of a day in history that stands out for Lena, a day that she will always remember. At the time, she was managing the Western Union Office. Right after it happened, a friend of Lena's ran to her, very upset, and told Lena and the other workers that President Kennedy had been shot. Afterward, they all went to go watch the coverage on the television. Lena recalled it as "a terrible, terrible day."

In that same decade, the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. was another sad day Lena spent glued to the television.

During Vietnam, Lena was still working at the Western Union Office, but she did her part by taking some families with children into her own home. When she left Western Union in 1971, she began

attending cosmetology school. Soon after, she began working for the Solano Community Health Department until she retired in 1989.

Retirement didn't stop her. She recently just went back to work again, at the age of 80. The only thing Lena misses from 'back in the day' is her two kids.

*"Follow your dream,  
always be honest and  
you'll never get in trouble."*



Her son died in 2002 from lung cancer, and her daughter died just three months later from a brain aneurysm.

Her advice to today's young generation is to "Follow your dream, always be honest and you'll never get in trouble."





# solanolibrary.com

## *Wins Web Design Award*

Solano County Library's website was awarded best non-profit site from the Massachusetts Innovation and Technology Exchange, a professional organization of over 6,000 technology, marketing and digital media professionals.

The award recognized Solano County Library along with organizations such as Home Depot, Merriam-Webster Inc., WGBH and John Deere.

ISITE Design was hired to help library staff to make the library as easy to use online as it is to use in person. "When you're short on time, it's better to be online than in line. The new design makes it easy to reserve a book, check the events schedule or get help with homework," said Ann Cousineau, Director of Library Services.



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