



*FRIENDS of the VINALHAVEN PUBLIC LIBRARY*  
**NEWSLETTER**

Winter 2020

## **A Different Kind of Library: Take a Book or Drop One Off**

By Colleen Conlan

If you wander up “the hill” and onto Starr Street, you’ll soon come upon a small structure on a post, a whimsical house-shaped cabinet filled with books. A glass door reveals the books inside. Open it up, go ahead, take one! You’ve found Vinalhaven’s own Little Free Library.

This neighborhood book exchange created and lovingly tended by Margaret Olson is part of a much larger movement of Little Free Libraries and book-sharing boxes found across the world, some 100,000+ and counting. The underlying idea is simply to increase access to books for readers of all ages and backgrounds. Margaret concurs whole-heartedly. “I just want to get books out to kids, as many as possible,” she says.

So far, about 300 or so books have gone out into the world, and about 125 have been returned. Unlike public lending libraries, “patrons” are encouraged to keep the books, if they wish. Margaret is just as happy when books don’t come back. She remembers well from childhood that feeling of owning books, of looking at your bookshelf and saying, “These are mine.”

Margaret has been around books and libraries for a long time. She worked at Vinalhaven Public Library as an assistant for several years and earned her associates degree in Library Science and Information Technology, doing her practical work as a volunteer at the Vinalhaven School library. She was well on her way to her bachelors degree, but life took her in another direction - she runs Viking Lumber with her husband, Ivan. She serves as a Library Trustee for our public library. And now she is the steward for her own little library.

She “opened” in April 2019, after a modest bequest came her way. “I had this unexpected little windfall, and I knew just what I wanted to do.” Ivan put up the structure, and Margaret began collecting books to fill it. She focuses on titles for children, from very young readers up to young adult, though there are also a few books for adults. All are new or are in like-new condition. She buys them and receives donations, often from young readers.



Margaret Olson and Annalee Dyer

To add to the library feel, she placed an Adirondack glider nearby, so readers have a place to sit. She plans to add a smaller, child-sized chair next summer for her youngest patrons. She even offers bookmarks and pencils.

Vinalhaven has lots of organizations promoting reading and literacy: Vinalhaven Public Library, Vinalhaven School Library, Second Hand Prose, Vinalhaven Reads, the Story Trail by Vinalhaven Land Trust, to name a handful. Margaret’s Little Free Library is the latest contribution, and a welcome one, especially with the town library closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of us are suffering a kind of “book hunger,” wanting to see and touch and read books. This tiny neighborhood book exchange, surrounded by abundant fresh air, fills a niche for grateful young readers. They can safely select books and even sit down and read them, if they choose.

Margaret loves seeing people discover her little library. “Sometimes parents bring kids around, or else they show up on their own,” she says. “It’s been a lot of fun!”

## Conversation with a Reader: **Catherine Haley, Relationship Banker at Camden National Bank, Vinalhaven**

By Susan Dempster

Catherine and I spoke on a recent Saturday morning. I was at home drinking coffee and she was on the ferry boat returning from the mainland. We had a fun conversation about reading and books, and I have to say it was so much fun to reconnect with her. I have known Catherine since she was in kindergarten as I was her school librarian. I was there when she started school and I saw her graduate from high school, so reconnecting was very special to me.

Catherine remembers her mother and father reading to her at home, Heather Reidy reading to her at Little Hands Nursery School, and me reading to her and classmates at the school library. The books she remembers most from her childhood are the beloved Berenstain Bears stories. She says she still has her collection of about twenty of them. I can attest to their popularity, as the children I taught in preK just a few years ago still loved those books! The first book that she read that really made her love reading was *The Woman in the Window* by A.J. Finn. She joined the Book of the Month Club and this was one of the first books she received. She credits the club with getting her to read more often and enjoy reading.

Her favorite genre is thrillers and that explains why her favorite book is *The Chestnut Man* by Søren Svestrup. Another favorite is *The Last Time I Lied* by Riley Sager. Both of these, as well as *The Woman in the Window*, are all described as mysteries, thrillers, and suspense. No wonder she didn't hesitate to answer when I asked her if a book had ever given her nightmares or kept her awake at night! She couldn't say who her favorite character from any book was but did say that she likes to be able to identify with the main characters. She also didn't have one book that changed her life, but reading a good book makes her think about her life and how she is living it. She says books open up new worlds for her.

Catherine and I spoke about other genres and she did let on that she loves a "good, sappy love story" too. She admitted that her secret pleasure books are The *Fifty Shades* series but she doesn't enjoy the vampire genre like the *Twilight* series that was all the rage a few years back.



She doesn't enjoy historical fiction or fantasy and sticks to her thrillers, realistic fiction, and mysteries.

She prefers print over e-books as she says reading on a device can be distracting for her. She chooses books by the cover: if the cover is cool, she will read the inside flap and then make her decision whether to read it or not. Again, she stated that she gets most of her books through the Book of the Month Club and most of her favorite books are through them. I have talked to a few other younger women who have recommended it to me so maybe I will check it out.

I asked her about favorite authors, and she said she enjoys Riley Sager's books. She met author Michael Tougias in person, known for his true-life survival-at-sea stories. Tougias came to Vinalhaven School when Catherine was in high school to talk about his book *Fatal Forecast*. I remember his presentation in the school auditorium and how excited the students were to meet him and so eager to read the book. She also talked about reading a few books by local authors Sherry and Catherine Bunin and one by Roz Zander titled *Pathways to Possibility*.

Catherine reads about a book a month but does have time in the winter to read more. She is currently reading *Letters to the Lost* by Brigid Kemmerer – a love story!

## Our Friendly Website is Here

Friends of the Vinalhaven Public Library has launched our own website! You can find information about our organization, become a member or renew your membership online, learn how to join us for our monthly meetings (via Zoom), find out the hours and protocols for the Library or Second Hand Prose, and more. There's even a digital archive of past newsletters! Check us out at [www.FriendsofVHLibrary.org](http://www.FriendsofVHLibrary.org).

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At this writing, Maine, like other places around the country, has had an increase in COVID-19 cases. For safety reasons, Vinalhaven Public Library remains closed. Patrons can call or email to request books and DVDs for curbside pick-up at the back of the library. Go to [www.FriendsofVHLibrary.org/library](http://www.FriendsofVHLibrary.org/library) for more details.

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## Do You Shop on Amazon?

You can support The Friends of the Vinalhaven Public Library through AmazonSmile.

Go to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and choose Friends of the Vinalhaven Public Library as your charity. Each time you make a purchase at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), we will receive 0.5% of the price. It all adds up!

Direct link: [smile.amazon.com/ch/01-0421208](http://smile.amazon.com/ch/01-0421208)

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## Find the Library on Facebook

Need a reminder about library hours or how to order books for curbside pick-up? Do you want to attend a Friends of the Library meeting via Zoom? Are you interested in virtually attending programs and lectures offered by other Maine libraries?

The Friends are assisting Scott and Linda in getting Library information out to the public on the reinvigorated Vinalhaven Public Library Facebook page.

This is where you'll find the details: [facebook.com/VinalhavenPublicLibrary](https://facebook.com/VinalhavenPublicLibrary).

## About the Friends

The Friends of the Vinalhaven Public Library (FOL) is a nonprofit group that provides support for the Library. Through dues, gifts, fundraising, and special projects, we support programming, resources, and services for Library patrons: children, young adults, and adults.

- We purchase books, magazines, media and meet special equipment needs, providing assistance when identified by the Library staff.
- We pay for all the costs of Inter-Library Loan services.
- We promote public awareness of the Library and stimulate use of its resources and services including the publication of a newsletter twice a year.
- We assist the Library Staff where needed.
- As volunteers we staff our used bookstore on Main Street, called Second Hand Prose.
- We work at keeping our Library looking great, including the outside plantings.
- We place funds in an endowment for the Vinalhaven Public Library.

Are You a Friend? Membership in Friends of the Vinalhaven Public Library helps our library provide those extra things. We count on YOU. Think of us in your year-end giving or in establishing a bequest. THANK YOU!

If you see "\*\*\*\*" printed on the newsletter label, your membership has lapsed. We'd love to have you renew your membership.

## Friends of the Vinalhaven Public Library Officers and Committee Chairs

Chair: Colleen Conlan  
Vice Chair: Christine Yannielli  
Treasurer: Larry Brady  
Assistant Treasurer: Pam Wetherbee  
Recording Secretary: Marjorie Smith  
Corresponding Secretary: Wendy Koelbl  
Second Hand Prose: Colleen Conlan  
Newsletter Editor: Colleen Conlan  
Newsletter Design: Craig O'Donnell  
Programs: Scott Candage  
Membership: Pam Wetherbee

Ex Officio:  
Scott Candage, Librarian  
Linda Whittington, Assistant Librarian

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*Color drawing by Heather White • Line drawing by Rhoda Boughton*

