

The

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FATHER'S DAY CAR SHOW

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Main Street's Book Cellar

An Underground Treasure Trove With Stories Untold

by Danica Low

Perhaps, Warrenton's best kept secret has been in business for nearly fifteen years. Nestled at the foot of Main Street, across from the Red Truck Bakery and underneath the John Barton Payne building, lies a cozy little book store. Warrenton residents know it as the "Book Cellar" and, now, as the only book store currently in Warrenton, others know it as a Town staple, and an invaluable resource, but others may not know of it at all. The non-profit's mission is to contribute funds to Fauquier County's three public libraries, and its proceeds support the libraries' programs year-round, and

help to hire summer library help.

Denise Johnson, the Book Cellar's volunteer coordinator and a Library Board member, and Deborah Heckman, a regular Book Cellar volunteer and Board member, are a few of the dedicated workers that are at the Book Cellar every weekend. They offered us an inside and intimate look at what this unique book haven has to offer its patrons.

The Book Cellar is operated by a team of approximately 20 dedicated volunteers, who carry a lot of weight in the success of the operation. "Every volunteer is invaluable, the impact each one of them make is great,"

says Mrs. Johnson. She emphasizes that more dedicated volunteers are needed to run the store on Fridays and Saturdays from 10am to 5pm. "Every volunteer brings their own personality, passion and energy to the store...we love to have new faces join us...the more, the merrier." She speaks fondly of a long-time volunteer who recently passed away. "Don Hayes worked here every single Saturday for many years. Some customers came just to see him. He really made an impact here and we're feeling his loss."

For those interested in volunteering, a shift is three and a half hours on a Friday or a Saturday,



Board member, Denise Johnson, and dedicated volunteer Deborah Heckman work the Book Cellar on a busy Friday afternoon.

or both. As an added perk, volunteers are credited \$1 to their account for in-store purchases, and are provided with “water and cookies during their shift,” adds Mrs. Johnson.

Mrs. Heckman’s dedication is clear, as she speaks about opening and closing the store, preparing shelves with new finds, and vacuums after a busy retail weekend. What does she want the community to know? “We have the cheapest prices in town! Many books are \$1 and sometimes we offer BOGO (buy one, get one free) sales.” Patrons who intend to make a purchase should bring cash or check, as the store does not process credit or debit cards.

And Mrs. Johnson adds, “Most surprising to our customers is the vast assortment of collectibles and autographed copies of unique and priceless treasures that we have here.”

The store is organized in sections, or genre, of reading materials and seeks to be user friendly, with a wheelchair/handicap accessible entrance on the rear side of the building, and wide aisles for all to navigate. A children’s section boasts shelves and shelves of classics such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Peter Pan*. An entire floor to ceiling shelf with supporting baskets full of homeschooling resources and curriculum is included in the cellar’s children’s section. VHS and DVD movies, as well as music CDs and towers of audio books complete the selection.

A very large section which draws in a regular following of collectors and historians is the section devoted to military books and resources. There are often collectibles found in this section and in other genres that are displayed throughout the store and above the main information desk and are for sale. They can range in price from approximately \$3 to \$100, depending on the item.

The Book Cellar often distributes information on specials and sales to attract and reward customers for their interest, and folks can sign up for these notices at the cellar.

Mrs. Johnson hints at a collectible and autograph sale coming up this fall and says that details may be followed



Above: Volunteer Deborah Heckman restocks shelves with donated books.

Right: Fauquier resident, Annalea Hall of Marshall, browses the Book Cellar’s children’s section.



on its Facebook page: (www.facebook.com/TheBookCellar). Interestingly, some of the Book Cellar's collectible items will be handled by Amazon and sold online. Mrs. Johnson explains that even though the cellar "undersells everybody," its prices are so low, and there are so many amazing finds to be found at the cellar, they still do not have the space to display all the books they receive. Amazon is an avenue to bring in additional income for the library, as it helps to keep overflow moving.

Nearly 1,500 square feet of building space, provided by Fauquier County Library, is home to more than 40,000 (estimated) books. The cellar continues to look for more storage space to be donated, and expresses extreme gratitude to Nicholas Kalis, a local property manager and real estate investor, who has contributed several local storage units, at no cost, to house an overflow of books, albums and other materials. "We can't yet make room for these other materials because of current space limitations," Mrs. Johnson shares. Although donations often come in faster than they can



The homeschool supply section offers an amazing selection

be placed on shelves, and there are obvious space issues, the Book Cellar directors emphasize that they are thankful to incur no overhead costs and are dedicated to remain in their current building.

The Book Cellar is able to provide approximately \$25,000-\$30,000 annually to support the Fauquier Public Library's programs throughout the Bealeton, Warrenton and Marshall

library branch locations. Its Board members and volunteers include local business owners, previous library workers, former teachers and everyday Fauquier residents. "Book readers share a certain passion that they can all relate to. We want to help keep book readers passionate for a long time," said Mrs. Johnson.



Danica Low is a regular contributing columnist for Lifestyle Magazines and a local marketing professional. For fourteen years, she has worked in private and public sector public relations, administrative and non-profit work. Her real enjoyment is encouraging and connecting with others. Crafting a story to bring light to a journey brings her joy.