

Local survivor's memoir will get all of Aurora on the same page



By Brock Weir

At the age of 16, Iranian student Marina Nemat found herself in jail, sentenced to death, and living in fear that each morning would be her last.

Ms. Nemat, now a resident of Aurora, was arrested for her political writings as a high school student, criticising the post-revolutionary regime and she was forced to watch as her contemporaries meet their fate behind bars.

Ultimately, however, a different fate awaited her and after a harrowing journey to the West with her family, it is a story she has not shied away from sharing.



Marina Nemat

Now, the Aurora Public Library wants all of Aurora to share the journey with her and quite literally get on the same page through 'One Book, One Aurora.'

One Book, One Aurora is based on programs like Canada Reads which celebrates books and writing and, according to the Library, 'builds a sense of community through the shared experience of reading [and encourages] Aurorans to read the same book, discuss it and take part in a shared experience.'

By the official launch on March 28, keep your eye out for portable 'lending libraries', crafted in the woodshop of the Aurora Seniors' Centre, which will be set up around Town at locations like the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex and Aurora Community Centre to pick up your copy of Ms. Nemat's debut memoir, 'Prisoner of Tehran', to enjoy, initial, and pass along to the next reader free of charge.

“We thought to get our community engaged and excited, what better way to do it than a book by an Aurora resident,” said Cindy Shaver of the Aurora Public Library. “We are fortunate enough to have Marina Nemat choosing Aurora as her home and she just happens to have a riveting story to tell. We thought this could be the perfect basis to spearhead a whole bunch of community dialogues around human rights.”

This community dialogue is something the Library has wanted to do for a very long time. They have purchased 100 copies of the book to distribute throughout the five “lending library” locations, and they have also bolstered their ready stock of the book at the Library itself.

“People can grab a book, read it, pass it along and bring it back to the Libraries,” says Ms. Shaver. “This will, hopefully, allow people to have much more access than purchasing the book on their own.”

With their desire to get a “community dialogue” going, online discussions will be held on the One Book, One Aurora website on human rights and international issues and, in addition, a series of community events are planned throughout the spring and summer to keep the conversation going.

First up is a screening of the documentary *Hatsumi*, following the experiences of families during Canada's Japanese internment during the Second World War, as well as a Write for Rights campaign in conjunction with Amnesty International, a Youth Poetry Contest, a Human Rights Panel in May, and a writers' workshop in June hosted by Ms. Nemat herself.

The program culminates in a special event with Ms. Nemat for Culture Days on September 27.

“I hope people take away a better understanding of the types of channels they have to address human rights in our community and just to get people out there on a global level,” said Ms. Shaver. “There are real, tangible ways we can make differences.”

For more on One Book, One Aurora, including events, discussions, and where you can borrow your book, visit www.onebookoneaurora.com. For more on Ms. Nemat's story, visit newspapers-online.com/auroran/?p=5042.