

AROUND PITTSBURG: SARAH JACOBSON

Concert to aid book program

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HOW MANY OF US recall the first magic moment when we fell in love with a book?

Reading has always provided so much more than just information; it has been a vehicle to travel to far-off places and different times, a way to get to know famous people, an instrument to make friends, a means to escape into lives other than our own.

We're lucky that so many Pittsburg residents are passionate about promoting reading and supporting the Literacy Project, a joint endeavor of the city of Pittsburg, the Pittsburg Unified School District and the Pittsburg Branch of the Contra Costa Library.

A wonderful tie-in to the Literacy Project is the Feb. 9 event at the Creative Arts Building, 250 School St., Pittsburg, featuring Marcus Shelby's "Harriet Tubman" jazz oratorio and local singer Faye Carol. Generous donations from Michael Kee's Annual Youth Fund golf tournament, Soroptimist International of Pittsburg, Pittsburg Kiwanis, Pittsburg Rotary Club, the Pittsburg Women's Community League and a special sponsorship donation from Soroptimist member Elizabeth Williams have made it possible to purchase 1,650 books to be made available for Pittsburg Unified School District students to read and keep. These Scholastic books, telling the heroic and inspirational story of Harriet Tubman, are grade-related, ranging from kindergarten to eighth-grade. Children who read the books will receive a special poster created by local artist Francis Palermo. For those students unable to attend the concert, CAB Corp. members, district officials and Marcus Shelby are working to schedule an additional performance during a school day for 2,000 district students.

An added bonus is that a portion of the ticket sales will go to the Pete Escovedo Music Scholarship for district students. Pittsburg High's Black Student Union and new nonprofit Delta Jazz Society are selling tickets for this event, which promises to be an outstanding performance. Since his appearance at the Creative Arts Building theater in July, when he performed at the special Port Chicago Remembrance ceremony, requests have come flooding in for Shelby's return. This February event honoring Tubman and her work with the Underground Railroad will breathe life into the story that so many more Pittsburg students will now be able to read for themselves.

Since we're focused on good works for students, here's one more item we can celebrate. Joni Lynn Grisham, a teacher at Pittsburg High School, has been named to the Women's Hall of Fame by the Contra Costa Commission for Women. She will be honored by the group at a dinner March 20 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 45 John Glenn Drive, Concord. Grisham's award is for Women Preserving the Environment. As a Pittsburg High School teacher for 12 years, she has designed curriculum, taught environmental studies, taught at the Pittsburg Natural Science Museum and acted as adviser for Club P.O.W.E.R. She has encouraged her students to work for the environment by planting trees at Contra Loma Reservoir and on Mount Diablo, performed wetland restoration projects and taken part in beach cleanups. Grisham is an example of an inspirational citizen who continually gives back to the community and works to encourage her students to do the same. She instills in her students a love of learning and demonstrates how putting that knowledge into action can genuinely make a difference. It's great to see that she is earning the recognition she deserves.