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AUTHORS ON A MISSION



CRIS BROADNAX / NEWS OF ORANGE

Author A.J. Mayhew reads from her first novel, *The Dry Grass of August*, on Sunday, Oct. 23, at the Burwell School Historic Site during *Authors on a Mission*, a fundraiser benefiting Orange Congregations In Mission

Writers join with local business, nonprofit to help OCIM meet a \$30,000 challenge

For more information about Orange Congregations In Mission, visit www.ocimnc.org

BY CRIS BROADNAX — *News of Orange* correspondent

Inside the Burwell School Historic Site on Sunday afternoon, Oct. 23, the aroma of java and freshly baked cookies and brownies filled the air, and the dark hardwood floors creaked with patrons dressed in khakis, slacks, vests, scarves, loafers and fashionable nerdy glasses. The Purple Crow Bookstore had a table stocked with books. It was an afternoon of readings by six local authors. However, this was not just an ordinary mini book tour; it was Authors on a Mission, a fundraiser for Orange Congregations In Mission, a nonprofit that helps those in need in northern Orange County.

The impetus behind the reading was a challenge by an anonymous donor who tasked OCIM with raising \$30,000 by Dec. 31; if the nonprofit is successful, the donor will match it dollar for dollar. "Any new money that comes in goes toward that matching grant, and that would mean a world of difference to the people of northern Orange County to have that extra \$30,000 to go towards their bills, medicine, clothes and food," said Angie Thompson, member of OCIM board of directors.

The challenge pushed her into action, propelling her to think of creative ways to fundraise. Thompson knew that Hillsborough is a literary enclave for writers and creative artists and thought it would be a great idea to invite them to help OCIM. She talked with another board member, Jean-Michel Margot — whose wife local author Anna Jean Mayhew had just published her first book — about doing an author reading fundraiser. Thus Authors on a Mission was born.

Among the authors who participated were writers Mayhew, Jill McCorkle, Nancy Peacock, Ed and Jan Howie, children's book writer John Bemis and poet Jeffery Beam.

About 40 patrons attended the event; ticket sales and proceeds from the book sales benefit OCIM and go toward the \$30,000 goal.

"We are really grateful to have our local authors to think enough of OCIM to donate their time and help out," OCIM Executive Director the Rev. Sharon S. Freeland said.

Ann Wagoner, vice president of OCIM's board of directors, emphasized the importance of having innovative fundraisers to inform the community of OCIM.

"Occasionally people are not aware of our mission here in northern Orange County," she said.

Freeland said OCIM helps people in the community maintain an awareness of their gifts and gives them an opportunity to help the less fortunate.

"I think people don't realize that we are in a beautiful historic facility and everything is wonderful and is rich with history," she said. "But the poor live among us, and we are doing our best to meet some of those needs."