RESILIENCE THROUGH STORY

Stories can help people overcome real-life challenges and bounce back from failures. Resilience involves the brain’s capacity to adapt to and cope with adverse events. A powerful mode of building resilience is through engaging with, discussing and telling stories.
Resilience Through Story is a series of events presented by MNU’s Mabee Learning Commons and sponsored by a grant through Humanities Kansas, exploring how stories (literary, historical, cultural, and personal) can help people cope with adverse life events and overcome challenges.

This series includes a variety of one-time humanities events, “common reader” book discussions, and podcast recordings. Additionally, this program guide includes information about MNU 2019-2020 art exhibitions “Word & Image: Visual Storytelling,” a series of exhibitions and accompanying artist talks. The public is invited to attend all of these free events hosted at MNU or the Olathe Public Library.
Panel Discussion, Resilience Through Story  
*September 5, 2019 | 7 – 8 pm*  
MNU, Mabee Learning Commons, 1st floor  

This panel discussion begins the year-long community conversation on how stories—literary, historical, personal, and cultural—can help people cope with adverse life events and overcome challenges. The panel features local humanities scholars, MNU faculty members and storytellers from Olathe. Learning stories, how they work and how to create them can help transfer a storyteller’s sense of narrative progression into an individual’s own methods of coping with life changes, challenges and even trauma. Presented in partnership with Humanities Kansas.

Introduction to Resilience Through Story: A Common Reader Book Discussion  
*September 7, 2019 | 10 am – Noon*  
Olathe Public Library, Downtown  

This introductory meeting will serve to introduce the year-long theme of “Resilience Through Story”, as well as provide a framework from which to explore resilience in future meetings. A variety of short excerpts will be read and discussed as an introduction to this theme. Participants will be encouraged to tell their own personal “resilience stories”. Conversation will be facilitated by one or more humanities scholars. A limited number of “A Monster Calls” books will be handed out at this meeting in preparation for the October 5 discussion.

“A Monster Calls”: A Common Reader Book Discussion  
*October 5, 2019 | 10 am – Noon*  
Olathe Public Library, Downtown  

“A Monster Calls” by Patrick Ness is a low-fantasy novel that recounts an extraordinary story of love, loss, and hope—providing a vivid exploration of a child’s grief and struggle in the midst of terrible emotional turmoil. The “monster” in the story serves to teach the child (Conor) about himself—indeed using stories themselves to help him come to terms with the challenges he is facing. “A Monster Calls” won the Carnegie Medal and the Greenaway Medal in 2012. Conversation will be facilitated by one or more humanities scholars. A limited number of “Persepolis” books will be handed out at this meeting in preparation for the November 2 discussion.

Lecture, Marwa Ghazali: African Refugee Stories—and Silence—in Kansas  
*October 10, 2019 | 7 – 8 pm*  
MNU, Mabee Learning Commons, Room 137  

The Bantu people of Somalia are an ethnic minority forced to leave their land during the Somali Civil War. In 1999, the U.S. State Department made it a priority to resettle these refugees in America. Today, many Somali Bantu call Kansas City home. Just as it is across the African continent, stories are an important part of Bantu oral histories and identity. But what happens to vulnerable and marginalized communities when stories are interrupted, silenced or forgotten? Through the power of stories and their erasure, this presentation explores the struggles of Somali Bantu in Kansas City to “live again” and redefine themselves collectively in the aftermath of violence, exclusion, and resettlement.  

Author Marwa Ghazali teaches anthropology at the University of Kansas and has research interests in African Studies and Peace and Conflict Studies. Presented in partnership with Humanities Kansas.

Game-based Storytelling Workshop, facilitated by Brynn Fitzsimmons  
*October 24, 2019 | 7 – 8 pm*  
MNU, Mabee Learning Commons, Room 207  

Research suggests stories are good for our brains, helping us cope with stress, rewrite trauma, and develop emotional and social skills for day-to-day life. While many people have tapped into these benefits of story through writing workshops or courses, storytelling is just as easily enacted through other mediums, such as story-based games. This workshop blends information and research about how and why stories can help us with practical, fun storytelling practice through a variety of games from MNU’s Center for Games and Learning. Whether you’re an experienced storyteller or new to telling stories, this workshop offers an accessible series of activities to help you use stories in a helpful [and fun] way.

Brynn Fitzsimmons is a PhD student in rhetoric and composition at the University of Kansas, where her work focuses on the intersection of narrative/storytelling, activism, and rhetoric. Presented in partnership with Humanities Kansas.
“Persepolis”: A Common Reader Book Discussion  
November 2, 2019 | 10 am – Noon  
Olathe Public Library, Downtown  

Persepolis is a graphic autobiography by Marjane Satrapi, depicting her childhood up to her early adult years in Iran during the Islamic Revolution. The book describes the ways that being Iranian and living during the Revolution shaped her life. Throughout the memoir, Marjane recounts how she learned about the difficult truths of the Revolution and what was happening around her through the stories she heard from others. This book demonstrates that while stories (including our own cultural and personal stories) do not always help us overcome real life challenges, they do help us cope with life changes, challenges and even trauma. Conversation will be facilitated by one or more humanities scholars. A limited number of “The Hate U Give” books will be handed out at this meeting in preparation for the February 1 discussion.

Poetry Writing Workshop facilitated by Miguel Flores  
November 14, 2019 | 7 – 8 pm  
MNU, Mabee Learning Commons, Room 207  

In this workshop, we’ll learn how to process difficult topics through the language of poetry in a safe and welcome environment. Topics discussed in this workshop may include trauma, gender, sex, race, and other personal issues. Whether you’re new to poetry or experienced, join us to learn, share, and discuss. Poems written at this workshop can be submitted to the upcoming Community Poetry Reading in March.

Facilitator Miguel Flores is a novelist and poet from Kansas. His work often covers trauma-informed themes of racial identity and awareness for domestic violence. Presented in partnership with Humanities Kansas.

“The Hate U Give”: A Common Reader Book Discussion  
February 1, 2020 | 10 am – Noon  
Olathe Public Library, Indian Creek  

In The Hate U Give, Angie Thomas explores Starr’s life in the aftermath of her friend’s death. The book is a somber reflection of contemporary events as its protagonist, a survivor of the incident, navigates her way through a violent and sometimes isolating world. Starr spends the story making hard choices in circumstances that remain incredibly relevant to a modern audience. Resilience is explored through the perspective of a protagonist who is sometimes brave, often scared, and always human. Conversation will be facilitated by one or more humanities scholars. A limited number of “Night” books will be handed out at this meeting in preparation for the March 7 discussion.

Lecture, Daniel Schwabauer: Elements of Story  
February 13, 2020 | 7 – 8 pm  
MNU, Mabee Learning Commons, 1st floor  

Humans are storytellers in part because story is an emotional language—much like music. Because it operates by principles that are shared across generations and cultures, it is often used to pass hard-won experience from person to person. In this lecture Daniel Schwabauer breaks down these elements of story, illustrating how story has the potential to lift, encourage, educate, and empower; or used to destroy.

Daniel Schwabauer, MA, is the Ben Franklin Award-winning writer of Runt the Brave and creator of the Amazing True Life Stories comic book series, as well as creative writing programs The One Year Adventure Novel, Byline and Cover Story. His professional work includes stage plays, radio scripts, short stories, newspaper columns, comic books, non-fiction ghost writing, and scripting for the PBS animated series Auto-B-Good. Presented in partnership with Humanities Kansas.

African American Read-In  
February 20, 2020 | 4 – 6:30 pm  
MNU, Mabee Learning Commons, 1st floor  

The National African American Read-In is the nation’s first and oldest event dedicated to diversity in literature. This specific two-day celebration is sponsored by MNU’s Mabee Learning Commons and Office of Intercultural Engagement. The campus and broader community are invited to submit 1-2 literary works that they would like to read during the event. More details regarding the submission process will be available at the beginning of the Spring 2020 semester. Presented in partnership with Humanities Kansas.
Film Screening, The Tree  
**February 27, 2020 | 7 – 9 pm**  
Olathe Public Library, Indian Creek  

Selected by 23 film festivals around the country and the winner of five Best Feature and Audience Choice awards, The Tree follows three days in the life of 88-year-old Dorothy Thorp as she drives from Kansas to Indiana on US Route 40 to reunite with her oldest and dearest friend. Inspired by the relationship between the director’s mother and her childhood best friend, The Tree “tackles important issues involving aging and independence yet does so in a way that is remarkably universal and deeply intimate.”

Writer/director Stephen Pruitt will introduce the film and facilitate conversation afterwards. Presented in partnership with Humanities Kansas and the Olathe Public Library.

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“Night”: A Common Reader Book Discussion  
**March 7, 2020 | 10 am – Noon**  
Olathe Public Library, Indian Creek  

Night by Elie Wiesel is the author’s account of his early life in Nazi-era Germany. It speaks its truth through emotion, delivering most of its real-life horrors with the power of literary narrative. The work frames the author’s experience as an account of survival and not necessarily triumph, “It was nothing more than chance. However, having survived, I needed to give some meaning to my survival.” Wiesel views himself as having a responsibility to speak for the dead and the living. Part of the power and resilience of this story lies directly in its text, but much of it also lies in what the author created post-tragedy. Night’s widespread accessibility has already made this text a well-read story that many are familiar with, but that by no means makes it comfortable. Conversation will be facilitated by one or more humanities scholars.

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Community Poetry Reading  
**March 12, 2020 | 7 – 9 pm**  
MNU, Bell Cultural Events Center  

MNU’s third annual community poetry reading begins with a presentation and reading by current Poet Laureate of Kansas, Huascar Medina, titled: May Our Voices Ring True. Poetry creates space where we can discover ourselves, find our place, and revel in beauty and truth. But through poetry we can also find connection with one another. This presentation will use poetry to help us find our voices, share our words, and discover what truly connects us. The latter half of the event will feature readings and performances of original work [read poetry and spoken word dances] by MNU students and community members. Students and community members may begin submitting their poems for the reading to library@mnu.edu as soon as January 1st, 2020. Presented in partnership with Humanities Kansas and the MNU Department of Arts & Humanities.

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Story Walk in Celebration of Cesar Chavez  
**March 31, 2020 | 4:30 – 6:30 pm**  
MNU Campus Green and Mabee Learning Commons  

In recognition of Cesar Chavez Day, this event commemorates the legacy of the civil rights and labor movement activist Cesar Chavez. The event begins with a Story Walk on the campus green and continues with cultural activities and a performance in Mabee Learning Commons. This event is presented in partnership with Humanities Kansas and the MNU Intercultural Engagement Office.

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Poetry, Storytelling & Service: A Common Reader Conclusion  
**April 4, 2020 | 10 am – Noon**  
Olathe Public Library, Indian Creek  

Various poetry selections will be read and discussed at this final common reader meeting. Participants are encouraged to bring their own poetry and writings to share. Discussion will also be had on how stories and storytelling can be a form of service. Conversation will be facilitated by one or more humanities scholars.
In collaboration between the Mabee Library and the MNU Student Counseling & Wellness Office, several podcast episodes will be recorded on the topic of Resilience Through Story.

These podcasts will be made available through - mnu.edu/our-mnu-stories

Potential topics include narrative theory, narrative therapy, storytelling and story structure, and personal stories from MNU students and community members. Contact Addison Lucchi at library@mnu.edu for more information about these podcasts, as well as how to attend the live studio recordings. This project is presented in partnership with Humanities Kansas and the MNU Student Counseling & Wellness Office.

Mabee Learning Commons Rotating Art Gallery
Word & Image: Visual Storytelling

Each of the six exhibitions and accompanying artist talks connect word and image; often using visual artwork as a medium through which to tell stories. The exhibitions range from mixed media dreamwork, to photography that tells the stories of the homeless, to story-driven oil paintings. Presented in partnership with MNU’s Department of Arts & Humanities.
September Exhibition: Polly Alice, Flame of Hope - Artist Talk, Freedom to be Creative  
September 12, 2019 / 7 – 8 pm  
MNU Mabee Learning Commons, 1st floor  

New and worn scraps of fabric, burlap jute, papers and threads make up the artist’s mixed media artwork. Polly Alice seeks to demonstrate the beauty of imperfection and echo the process of our everyday journey to piece a life together that is beautiful. To her, these paintings say, “let go of the past and hold fast to hope.”

Polly Alice received her BFA in studio art from Messiah University and her MFA in writing for children and young adults from Hamline University. As an author, artist, writer and speaker she is a multipotentialite. Polly won the 2014 Ernest Hartmann award from the International Association for the Study of Dreams from Berkley, California, for her research on self-awareness for writers and artists through dreamwork. Her meditative symbolist art has been published in U.S. newspapers and magazines and is showing internationally.

Polly’s exhibition of mixed media artwork, entitled Flame of Hope, will be displayed in the Mabee Learning Commons rotating art gallery during the entire month of September.

October Exhibition: David Beal, American Realist and Portrait Artist - Artist Talk, Visual Storytelling  
October 3, 2020 / 7 – 8 pm  
MNU Mabee Learning Commons, 1st floor  

David’s contemporary and classic oil portraits not only convey a likeness of the subject, but his work captures the spirit and character of the individual subject. His unique ability to capture the personality of the sitter through local color, lighting and environment sets his work apart. In a recent short talk at MNU, he described his work as “visual storytelling.”

David’s work has won many national and regional awards, and his paintings have appeared in/on the covers of national publications such as The Artist’s Magazine, Southwest Art Magazine, and American Artist’s Magazine. His work has appeared at the Society of Illustrators in New York. And many galleries in the Midwest.

November Exhibition: Megan Kasper - Artist Talk, Dance on Earth as they Dance in Heaven  
November 7, 2019 / 7pm – 8pm  
MNU Mabee Learning Commons, 1st floor  

This exhibition visually explores “the spirit of dance”—looking at how dance is a powerful expression of worship and witness, and how we can learn more about the Lord through it. The exhibition includes both pen & ink pieces and paintings. Megan describes her art as a “prophetic outlet that encourages others to know the beauty of our God, expressing the garden of His heart through visual inspiration.”

Megan has been a part of the International House of Prayer KC (IHOPKC) art teams for 7+ years. In addition to art, she loves dancing, hiking, traveling, people, and making life more beautiful. She describes art as her “first language”. At age 24, she started taking art classes for the first time—and, her prayer then was, “Lord, please show me how each piece can be a prophetic declaration of who you are; something out of the box of this world.” He answered that prayer by guiding Megan through each process of every project. Megan discovered that prophetic art should be her path both as a business and a way of ministering to others. Her desire is for everyone to experience the many ways the Lord speaks.

January Exhibition: Dennison Schultz, Cubist Self-Portrait - Artist Talk, “water warped bulbously”: Imagining Cubist Selves  
January 23, 2020 / 7 – 8 pm  
MNU Mabee Learning Commons, 1st floor  

Dennison Ty Schultz is a poet and MFA candidate at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, primarily working with experimental poetics at the intersection of traditional formal poetry, visual poetry and visual art. These installations are poems from a series of Cubist self-portraits, which confront the unavoidable: the physical body, emotional circuitries, contradictions, impulses, desires. Entering a history of Cubism, the poems reckon with motion and stillness, space and time, fragment and collective, without being able—or wanting—to reduce them to a single cohesive understanding of “self.”

The series wants to reimagine how we think about the relationship between poem and page, between self and body, and between ourselves and others, in tangible and spiritual ways. Dennison’s poems, including versions of some of these poems, have been published in Foglifter, New Delta Review, Fugue, Sycamore Review, and Black Warrior Review, among others.
February Exhibition: Sharon Rodriguez, Making the Invisible Visible: One Story at a Time - Artist Talk, Social Justice in Photograph
February 6, 2020 | 7 – 8 pm
MNU Mabee Learning Commons, 1st floor

Sharon has photographed and interviewed the homeless of Johnson County, KS since 2014. She started to document them to dispel the perception that this wealthy county does not have a homeless population. The images in this exhibition depict the face of the Johnson County Homeless. Taking the subject further, the artist gives her subjects the power to voice their personal stories and the opportunity to write it in their own hands. These personal stories are displayed next to their photographic likenesses. In her artist talk, Sharon will describe how she started with photographing the homeless, talk about some of the people she has interviewed and photographed, and let you know what you can do to help the homeless.

As an artist, Sharon has always been interested in photographing and telling the stories of people who mostly go unseen in the world: mothers, grandmothers, the elderly, etc. She is fascinated by the grace and gifts of an everyday human, and she loves to shed light on those who think they are just making-do, when in fact, it is their work that is at the heart of our civilization.

March Exhibition: Erin Elizabeth

Erin is a visual storyteller. Her imaginative paintings are sparked from getting lost in the natural world, daydreams, and escaping into literature and music. Like a dream, not everything has to be so literal in its representation, and the elements get to simply live together. Each piece is full of enchanting imagery and wonder. Erin’s hope is that her works of art evoke an emotion, begin a story, or bring a moment of space in life to pause while wondering about what’s seen.

Erin studied painting and art history during her college years and graduated with a B.A. in Studio Art from Columbia College. Erin’s primary studio is in Southern Missouri where she also works on her family farm. Note: There is no artist talk for the March exhibit.

April Exhibition: MNU Community Art Display - Artist Talk with MNU Artists
April 16, 2020 | 7 – 8 pm
MNU Mabee Learning Commons, 1st floor

During the month of April, the Mabee Learning Commons rotating gallery will feature a joint collection of work by MNU students, staff, faculty and alumni. These MNU artists will be invited to give brief talks about their work as a part of this joint artist talk. A call for artists will go out in early spring, and the specific artists displaying their work will be announced in March 2020. Presented in partnership with the Department of Arts & Humanities.
Resilience Through Story Project by MidAmerica Nazarene University

Supported by Humanities Kansas
In collaboration with the Olathe Public Library

For information: 913.971.3567 | library@mnu.edu

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