

Lake Oswego Reads 2017

August 25, 2016

Lake Oswego Reads Announces Book for 2017

The Lake Oswego Public Library has selected *Rise of the Rocket Girls: The Women Who Propelled Us, from Missiles to the Moon to Mars* by Nathalia Holt as the 2017 book for its award winning citywide reading program.

Rise of the Rocket Girls is the true story of the women called "computers" who launched America into space. In the 1940s and 50s, when the newly created Jet Propulsion Laboratory needed quick-thinking mathematicians to calculate velocities and plot trajectories, they didn't turn to male graduates. Rather, they recruited an elite group of young women who, with only pencil, paper, and mathematical prowess, transformed rocket design, helped bring about the first American satellites, and made the exploration of the solar system possible.

For the first time, *Rise of the Rocket Girls* tells the stories of these women--known as "human computers"--who broke the boundaries of both gender and science. Based on extensive research and interviews with all living members of the team, *Rise of the Rocket Girls* offers a unique perspective on the role of women in science: both where we've been, and the far reaches of space to which we're heading.

Library Director Bill Baars said, "Nathalia Holt's *Rise of the Rocket Girls* provides a fascinating insight into the work of the first "computers," the dedicated women who worked at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and were an integral part of guiding us to the moon and beyond. February will be another terrific month of conversations and events. We've had some great Lake Oswego Reads programs but this one should be out of this world."

Nathalia Holt, Ph.D. is a science writer who also wrote *Cured: The People who Defeated HIV*. Her work has appeared in publications including *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Slate*, *Popular Science*, and *Time*. She has trained at the Ragon Institute of MGH, MIT and Harvard University, the University of Southern California, and Tulane University. She lives with her husband and their two daughters in Boston, MA. Thanks to the Friends of the Lake Oswego Library, Holt will be speaking in Lake Oswego in February.

The official kickoff of Lake Oswego Reads will be on January 9, 2017. As has been the practice for all 11 years, a free book will be distributed to Lake Oswego Public Library card holders, thanks to the Friends of the Lake Oswego Library.

The Lake Oswego Reads committee is presently developing a schedule of programs for February so that Lake Oswego residents can not only discuss *Rise of the Rocket Girls* but also experience the book with speakers, music, food, displays, art and more. The Library is asking the community for suggestions for speakers who live in the Lake Oswego area who were astronauts, worked at JPL, NASA or are experts on topics related to rockets and space exploration. Please contact Cyndie Glazer at 503-675-2538 or cglazer@lakeoswego.city.

This will be the program's 11th year and all events will be free thanks to financial support from the Friends of the Lake Oswego Public Library, Lake Oswego Rotary Club and the Lake Oswego Review.

Rise of the Rocket Girls was selected by the Steering Committee for Lake Oswego Reads, consisting of librarians, community leaders, high school English teachers and high school students. After this year's successful selection of *Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher* by Timothy Egan the committee knew it would be challenging to find another great book for 2017. After reading and discussing 28 books, the committee is excited to have selected *Rise of Rocket Girls*. Comments from committee members:

Andrew Edwards, Executive Director, Lakewood Center for the Arts

"Inspiring and thought-provoking, these women defied the sexist stereotypes of their times and changed the course of history. A groundbreaking moment in the history of women's rights."

Joann Geddes, Director for Program Outreach & Development, Academic English Studies, Lewis & Clark College

"If I were perusing a book shelf and saw the cover and title Rise of the Rocket Girls..., and if left to my own inclinations, I would never have picked up this book. Indeed, I was not the first on the LO Reads Selection Committee to volunteer to read it; however, thanks to the strong recommendations of others, I found myself discovering a world I had not known existed. Nathalia Holt follows the lives and work of a few key women during the 1940s and 50s and highlights their contributions as "computers" to the evolution of the U.S. space program. That this little known look at our history is set within that particular cultural context and told in the voices of that era might challenge gender and feminist perspectives of our times, but this too will surely give us much to ponder and debate during the 2017 Lake Oswego Reads program. I will surely never look at a computer or think of that term in the same way again, and I believe that the story of these pioneering female "computers" is one that will inform, captivate and inspire readers of all ages."

Lilly Logan, Committee member

"I have a whole new appreciation for the term 'rocket science' after reading the Rocket Girls story. As I sit and watch the International Space Station fly over Lake Oswego this evening, the event possibilities for Rocket Girls are like the shooting stars of the meteor shower."

Nancy Niland, President, Friends of the Lake Oswego Library

"I thoroughly enjoyed this book and am eagerly anticipating the wide range of interesting programming and spirited community discussion. The Friends of Lake Oswego Public Library is honored to be a part of this incredible event. Is it February yet?"

Shannon Sedell, Librarian, Lake Oswego Library

"In regards to choosing it as the LO Reads selection, Rise of the Rocket Girls is a significant story, and I believe that it will inspire important and interesting conversations about the role of women in STEM professions over the years."

Terry Huber, Past President, Friends of the Lake Oswego Library

"This is the fascinating true story of the women in the 1940s and '50s who, with only pencils, paper and mathematical expertise helped launch the U.S. into space."

For a list of all 28 books the committee read and considered, go to <http://www.ci.oswego.or.us/loreads/books-considered-2017>,

Cyndie Glazer, Lake Oswego Library Program Manager of Lake Oswego Reads said, "The hard part is finished selecting our book for 2017. Now the fun part begins of finding displays and 30 events that will tie into the book. We really appreciate the suggestions that our community will share. We look forward to hearing from you!"

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