

FOAL Focus

A Quarterly Newsletter from Friends of the Auberry Library

FOAL Visits Local Schools to Share the Gift of Books



FOAL Board Member Anne Neal explains the gift and encourages students to enjoy their summer reading

At the end of the school year, representatives from FOAL and the Auberry Library visited first grade classrooms at Foothill Elementary, Pine Ridge Elementary, and Big Creek Elementary. Their mission was to encourage reading over the summer by providing each student with three brand new books, plus a bag of pencils, stickers and other treasures from the library. An additional goal was to raise awareness of the libraries, and the fun summer programs for children at each branch.

The LoWayne Kittinger First Grade Book project has been in place for many years, and since 2017 it has been funded and expanded by a generous grant from Valley Iron, Inc. This partnership, along with books provided at a generous discount from Petunia's Place, has enabled FOAL to celebrate the learning of reading through our schools.

Benefit Concert Sept 13th

We are happy to announce the return of the annual benefit concert, with live music accompanied by performances by the Mana Fire Dancers. This fundraising event is the one time a year when FOAL charges an admission fee, which helps sponsor our programs throughout the rest of the year. Food and drink will be available for purchase, and there will be a silent auction as well. Early bird tickets will be available online for \$12 at our [website](#) in advance, and regular sales at the gate for \$15. Children under 10 are free!

Bring your chairs and blankets to enjoy this event on the lawn at the library's lovely Sohm Garden, but please, no pets or alcohol.

Chat From the Chair



Jamelie Taylor, FOAL Chair

Now that 4th of July has come and gone, summer is officially here and predicted to be hotter than our usual hot. There are several ways to

enjoy the heat: go away, go higher or stay in a cool place. One cool place to hang and enjoy Tuesday through Saturday is the Auberry library.

Summer programs for children and adults are on Wednesday mornings this year and pre-registration either online or through the branch is recommended. The summer reading program is set up and awaiting signups.

FOAL has evening concerts on the lawn and speaker programs in the library to keep everyone

entertained in the cooler hours after sunset. Events begin at 7:30 and if it's outside, bring a chair or blanket to be comfortable.

Participating in any of these free events provides an opportunity to make new friends which is what FOAL is all about. Our mission to provide a cultural gathering place is very important in all seasons but especially during those times of year when we can be outside enjoying our foothill community and weather. Come join us!

FOAL's mission is to

- *Support the Auberry Branch Library as it strives to encourage literacy and lifelong learning*
- *Provide a vibrant cultural gathering place;*
- *Enhance the Library's resources and services;*
- *Increase community access to information and knowledge.*

FOAL Partners with Local Teen to Maintain “Little Library” Project

Sierra High senior (now graduate!) Avery Jones chose a project near and dear to our book-loving hearts: she set out to establish several “little libraries” in our community. She came to share her project with the attendees at the annual meeting in June, with a proposal: that FOAL would help maintain the book supply after she went away to college.

Jones set up libraries at three locations: Foothill Elementary School, Big Sandy Rancheria Head Start, and Cressman's Gas Station at the top of the four lanes. The idea of these libraries is to make

books visible and available for borrowers to take and read at their leisure. She focused on children's books for the elementary school, but all ages for the other two locations, reasoning that a range of family members might see the books when dropping off children, or when heading up to enjoy the high country.

The FOAL Board happily agreed to check on the libraries periodically and supply books that are part of our normal book sale inventory. All in all, this partnership is a “win” for our whole community.

FOAL Annual Membership Meeting

Every June, FOAL invites all associate members to come see what we have done, and what our goals are for the upcoming year. This year, the format was a regular meeting, where members could see how the board conducts its business, and also see financials from the prior year. FOAL has made real progress in the goal to balance revenues and expenditures, and we are looking to continue this momentum for a sustainable future. The discussion was very productive, culminating in our traditional ice cream social.

Anne Neal Speaker Series: Jazz Director Richard Giddens July 29th



Richard L. Giddens Jr, Associate Professor and Director of Jazz Studies, CSU Fresno

Mark your calendars for July 29th, when bassist and composer Richard Lloyd Giddens Jr. will give a talk about his interesting life journey as a musician. Having grown up in Fresno, CA, he moved to New York City at the age of 17 after receiving a full scholarship to the Jazz and Contemporary Music Program at The New School for Social Research, studying with many renowned artists. After two years, he put his education on hold to accept national tours with various bands as well as with the Off-Broadway show STOMP. After many years on the road, he decided to again focus on his education, earning his BFA (2007) and MFA (2009) from California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, CA. It was at CalArts where Giddens studied with and was mentored by the world-renowned bassist and Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award winner Charlie Haden.

Giddens eventually came back to Fresno, CA to take care of his mother and became the first ever Director of Jazz Studies at Fresno State, where he has made an incredible impact. Giddens is a 2018 California Arts Grant Recipient, and in May of 2025, under Giddens direction, the Fresno State Jazz Orchestra won a prestigious Outstanding Performance Award from DownBeat Magazine.

Giddens will speak Tuesday, July 29th, indoors at the Auberry Branch Library at 7:30 pm.

FOAL Awarded Rural Arts Access Grant

Have you heard of the Fresno Arts Council (FAC)? This local arts agency partners with the California Arts Council to support a variety of arts organizations as well as individual artists in the city and county of Fresno. The non-profit organization hosts many programs and services including: ArtHop, the 559 Mural Project, Arts in Education and the City of Fresno Poet Laureate to name a few.

In January of this year FAC offered to fund proposals in the rural communities often underserved by grant opportunities or arts investments. FOAL applied for a grant to fund our summer concert series with a particular emphasis on youth outreach and we were awarded. The warm summer evenings tend to attract more families to enjoy music on the lawn where children can dance, listen and see live music. Our next concert is July 30 with the local blues band Bill Clifton & the Chicken & Whiskey Band. Come and enjoy the community coming together at the library!

Membership Drive Changes

If you have ever received a membership drive notice, and wondered if you are current, we have great news! We have shifted our drive to once a year, in the summer, so if you get a notice, you will know it is time to renew.

FOAL will be reaching out to all our current members, plus those on our mailing list, with a reminder of the value of these charitable donations, and the programs they support.

There are many membership levels to suit your situation. All are appreciated. There are also many ways to pay the dues, including via mail, and online at our website. In fact, you can click on this link and get it done right now! [Become a member](#)

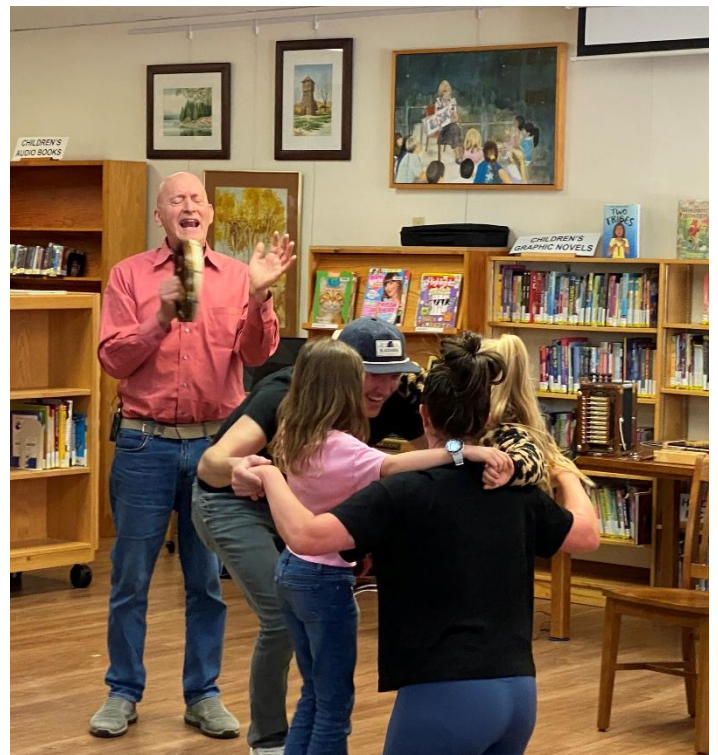
Library Link: Auberry Branch Update

Summer at the library is great fun, with so many programs directed to engage children on their summer break. We're just including here all the local activities for children and teens in July. Keep up with planned activities on the Fresno County Library website [here](#):

- [Auberry: Teen Faux Stained Glass Take and Make](#) Wed Jul 9th 2025
- [Auberry: Magic Show with Winston the Magician](#) 10:00am - 11:00am, Wed Jul 9th 2025
- [Auberry: Bubble Show with Wild Child Adventures](#) 10:00am - 11:00am, Wed Jul 16th 2025
- [Auberry: Teen Robots VS Maze](#) 1:00pm - 2:00pm, Wed Jul 16th 2025
- [Auberry: Teen Paper Book Nook Craft Take and Make](#) Wed Jul 23rd 2025
- [Auberry: Reptile Ron Animal Presentations](#) 10:00am - 11:00am, Wed Jul 23rd 2025
- [Auberry: Teen Dragon Eye Keychain Craft Take and Make](#) Wed Jul 30th 2025

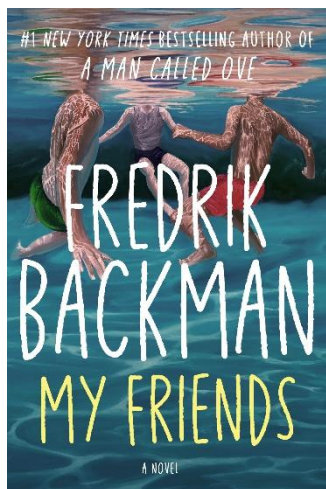
Family Musical Program Delights Attendees

On March 29th, a small but lively crowd of all ages gathered to participate in a family musical program at the library. Local musician Evo Bluestein brought his extensive background of folk concert performance, production, and musical instruction to the Auberry Library for a family-focused concert during the afternoon. During the program, he regaled the group with a history and structure of American folk music on various instruments. Bluestein performed on the dulcimer, spoons, autoharp and more to demonstrate different styles of songs, including favorites like "Skip to my Lou", "Frog in a Bucket", "Hambone" and "This Land is Your Land", with a little history and context for each song. He invited audience members to partner with him on several of the instruments, and also coached some traditional dances with the songs. It was an animated and very entertaining afternoon for all involved!



Bluestein on the autoharp, and on the tambourine leading a family in a folk dancing lesson

A Friend Recommends: Book Review



My Friends by Fredrick Backman (2025)

Genre: Fiction

Reviewer: Jamelie Taylor

“You never have the sort of friends you have when you’re fifteen ever again.” If you know this to be true this book by Fredrick Backman is for you. He writes of four teens whose friendship provides solace, laughter and hope one summer on a pier by the sea when the truth of their lives was difficult to bear.

As readers we learn their summer story in bits and pieces twenty-five years later through the eyes of another troubled teen. Among other things Louisa learns that “Art is what we leave of ourselves in other people” as she follows the often poignant and sometimes humorous trail of a painting with Ted, whose grief makes him forget how to breathe. Enjoy welcoming these five new friends into your life.

Music Outreach to Sierra High

In April, the band Celtic Alchemy visited Sierra High as part of FOAL’s ongoing music outreach program. Three times a year, FOAL invites one of the evening bands to visit the high school students and talk about their music, experiences, and their profession. This band was exceptionally good at that mission, perhaps since much of their music is storytelling as well. The word “Alchemy” in their name is very appropriate—they shared several takes on a blend of music (Free Bird, Stairway to Heaven). But of course, the main theme was Irish music and the stories told through the songs. The band introduced its three members: Paddy on guitar and vocals, David on bass, who is also a music teacher, and Kevin, on percussion. Although Kevin is not the regular percussionist for the band, he was a fun addition playing a 5-gallon plastic water bottle that he had converted to a percussion instrument—probably the most expensive water jug ever!

One of the real treasures in this outreach was the history embedded in the songs. Paddy described the history before each song, which made the listening even more meaningful. For example, “The Foggy Dew” was written about the Easter Uprising, a tumultuous time in the history between England and Ireland in the early 1900s. Another example is “Black and Tan”, referencing the conflict between Britain and Ireland in the 1920s. To add a current reference for the students, the band also played “Too Sweet” by Irish artist Hoosier. An interesting aside was a story about a current artist, Cedar Dobson from Northfork, who has gained international acclaim as a musician in this genre. Overall, this was a great educational experience for students in our FOAL community!



Summer Calendar

Tuesday, July 29th. Anne Neal Speaker Series: Fresno State Associate Professor Richard Giddens on his experiences as a musician. Indoors at the Auberry Library. 7:30-8:30 pm.

Wednesday, July 30th. Concert: Clifton's Chicken & Whiskey Band. Sohm Garden at the Auberry Library, 7:30-9:00 pm.

Saturday, Sept 13th. Benefit Concert: Live music and the Mana Fire Dancers. Sohm Garden at the Auberry Library, 7:30-9:00 pm.

More to come! We will keep you informed via e-mail.

About Us

Friends of the Auberry Library (FOAL)

A registered non-profit since 2005

Tax ID #: 20-2834496

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FOAL Focus Newsletter

Connie Schlaefer, Editor

The Friends of the Auberry Library would like to thank the following sponsors for their generous support:

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