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FOR MORE INFORMATION
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LONG BEACH READS ONE BOOK 2010

THE SOLOIST by STEVE LOPEZ

Wednesday March 3 through Sunday, March 14

HISTORY

by Mary E. Barton, Ph.D., who started it all!

Our two major goals for **Long Beach Reads One Book**—or **Book Week**--have always been to foster a sense of community—to give people who don't know each other something in common—and to share the joy of reading. That's essentially what Book Week is all about!

I first heard on the radio that everyone in Chicago was reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* that week, and that they were doing it because Seattle had already done it. I thought to myself, "If those two cities can do it, Long Beach can certainly do it, too! Imagine how great it would be if everyone read the same book...discussed the same book...shared their learning...and got to know each other!" Wow—that would be fun!

So, I did a little research and phoned some people and before you know it, I'd more or less figured out what it took! A dear friend, Diane Jacobus, loved the idea and put me in touch with the Long Beach Public Library Foundation and we were off and running!

One thing we did from the start, and which distinguishes us from most other cities, is to involve the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) very intensely. We always choose a book that can be enjoyed by students—some years high school and other years lower grades. Every year, the Superintendent has partnered with us in one way or another, and so we've spread our reach way beyond the libraries, so that we truly have a multi-generational event each year. Some years the LBUSD buys the books for the students, some years we take that responsibility, and this year, we have received donations of the books from around the country! That makes this year *truly unique!*

MORE...MORE...MORE

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My own vision for **Book Week** involves our entire community, and many of them have taken the challenge! I also envision enticing employers to sponsor book clubs—I envision employees at all levels bringing their books in over a brownbag lunch to discuss the book, the author and the important themes raised in their reading. What a morale builder at work! I can also envision entire congregations adopting a book for meaningful discussion—imagine the breakthroughs that could be accomplished for our homeless and needy people if every church in Long Beach encouraged people to follow Steve Lopez’s example with Nathaniel Ayres. What courage and commitment we could inspire!

We’ve always taken primarily a “coordinator” role, so Book Week is truly a grassroots event—other organizations sponsor their events and we assist, but they take ultimate responsibility. My co-chair Susan Redfield and I often comment on the incredible creativity that our partners exhibit with their programs! If we sat down and thought up every program we could, we’d never come up with the astonishing array of events that our partners bring to **Book Week**. Just this year, for example, who would have thought about **SENDING A BOOK ON A JOURNEY**? It’s the brainchild of Betty Buffington, one of the Friends of the Library, which will generate a library of free books for people without homes—no library card required! Such creativity!

When we started **Long Beach Reads One Book**, almost 10 years ago now, the Library Foundation was only about three years old and most people had no idea of what the Foundation was, or what it did. I think as a direct result of **Book Week**, and the tremendous publicity it has received throughout the city, most people at least know there is *some organization* that puts on **Book Week**. It helps us put the spotlight on the need for more reading, and that is a natural segue to the rest of our programs, which focus much more on the nitty-gritty of literacy, attaining reading skills, and the other skills we provide access to in our Family Learning Centers—one in every branch of our city’s libraries—and through our off-site reading program, Raising a Reader.

Because we choose a different book each year, our partners shift a bit from one time to the next. The programs are different, and we meet many new people across the community.

I cannot stop before saying what a joy it has been to be involved with **Book Week**! The many, many avid readers—and people who yearn for that connection to their community—have made this annual program so worthwhile and so much fun. I have met wonderful friends each year. I hope the community loves it as much as I do!