

2024 Lunch 4 Literacy Luncheon featuring Brendan Slocumb

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of February 26, 2024)

Altrusa and Oak Ridge Breakfast Rotary Club proudly again present the annual Lunch 4 Literacy Luncheon at the Oak Ridge High School on Tuesday, March 19, 2024. Be making your plans now to attend and support this initiative for improving literacy in our communities.

This year the lunch is a plate lunch and the amazing speaker will be there in person. Come at 11:30 AM to enjoy networking and get started with the excellent lunch and enjoy the outstanding speaker.

Co-Chair of the Lunch 4 Literacy Committee Amber Roberts said, "I am continually inspired by our innovative educators and community leaders who find ways to mobilize the funds generated by the annual Lunch for Literacy to impact literacy in our area. There is no greater gift and no greater power than the ability to read. I look forward to this year's luncheon when we will highlight the amazing work done over the past year to empower the citizens of all ages of Anderson and Roane counties."

You will be proud to see what we have done last year as you will read below about the 19 projects you helped to support by your attendance and sponsorship of this annual luncheon.

Again, this year we have an outstanding author and accomplished musician, Brendan Slocumb. Let me tell you about him and the two books being featured. You may purchase copies and the author will sign them at the event.

[Violin Conspiracy](#)

Published on February 1, 2022, *Violin Conspiracy* has Ray McMillan, a young Black musician, learn that his grandfather's fiddle is a priceless Stradivarius. When it is stolen, Ray risks everything to get it back. Racism and the music world figure prominently in the coming-of-age novel.

[Symphony of Secrets](#)

Published on April 18, 2023, *Symphony of Secrets* is a mystery, thriller, historical fiction, and historical mystery. Bern Hendricks, a music professor, is tasked with restoring a lost symphony. The symphony's composer, Delaney, may have stolen music from Black Jazz Age prodigy Josephine Reed. The suspense and tension run high.

Brendan's Bio:

"Brendan Nicholas Slocumb was raised in Fayetteville, North Carolina. He is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a degree in music education, concentrations on Violin and Viola. For the past two decades, he has been a public and private school music educator from kindergarten through twelfth grade, teaching general music, orchestra, and guitar ensembles.

"His students were often chosen for district and regional orchestras. In 2005, Brendan was named Teacher of the Year for Robert E. Lee High School; he has been named to Who's Who of American teachers and is a Nobel Teacher of distinction. Brendan also serves as an educational consultant for the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

"Music has always played a major part of Brendan's life. He believes that it's a life-saving force, and a gift we should always offer our children. When he was nine, he started playing violin through a public-school music program. Friends he grew up with are today sitting in

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jail; when they were out running the streets, he was in rehearsals. When they were breaking into people's houses, he was practicing Dvorak and Mozart.

"His violin opened the door to opportunity, and he ran through it. Since then, Brendan has performed with the Washington Metropolitan Symphony, the McLean Symphony, the Prince George's Philharmonic, and the Alexandria Symphony. He has served as the concertmaster for the NOVA-Annandale Symphony Orchestra and regularly performs chamber music with members of the Alexandria Chamber Music Society.

"He maintains a private music studio teaching lessons to students on violin, guitar and piano. Brendan believes that everyone can learn to appreciate and love music, and that it can be a new way of communicating, building bonds, and connecting with people who may look, sound, or speak differently.

"In 2022, Brendan published his first novel, *THE VIOLIN CONSPIRACY* (Anchor Books), a GMA Book Club Pick, the riveting story of a young Black musician who discovers that his old family fiddle is actually a priceless Stradivarius: when it's stolen on the eve of the world's most prestigious classical music competition, he risks everything to get it back.

"In 2023, Brendan published his second novel, *SYMPHONY OF SECRETS* (Anchor Books), about a music historian who discovers that the world's greatest composer may have stolen the music from a neurodivergent Black woman – and the powers-that-be will do anything to silence the historian. Brendan is now at work on his third novel, to be published in early 2025."

As you can see, this year is no exception for the annual Lunch 4 Literacy Luncheon as a nationally well-known bestselling author is again featured. We return to our standard full meal lunch and in person speaker as well as the opportunity to purchase and read his books.

Thanks to the several faithful sponsoring organizations and the continuing support of attendees, more literacy grants are anticipated in 2024.

Altrusa International of Oak Ridge and the Oak Ridge Breakfast Rotary Club, sponsors of the annual Lunch for Literacy in Oak Ridge, recently announced the literacy grant awards for calendar year 2023. Over \$27,000 was awarded for initiatives in Anderson and Roane Counties to support literacy from early childhood through high school. The 19 awards are included below, however, some awards were similar in nature and are grouped in the bullets.

- ADFAC (Aid to Distressed Families of Appalachian Counties) is receiving funds to help finance ADFAC's School Supply Program that distributes backpacks and school supplies to children who might not get these supplies without this program.
- The Blossom Center for Childhood Excellence in Oak Ridge is receiving money for books for students, teachers, and parents, plus child-size soft furnishings for classrooms.
- Both Glenwood Elementary School and the Boys and Girls Club of the Clinch Valley (Oak Ridge) were awarded grants to supply books for their book vending machines that entice children with books as rewards they can receive for good school attendance and other achievements. The Boys and Girls Club grant will also help equip the club with bookshelves.

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- The Boys and Girls Club of Anderson County was awarded funding for program resources for their "Rookie Readers" literacy skills program for kids in club programs at Lake City, Clinton, North Clinton, and South Clinton Elementary Schools.
- Children's Museum of Oak Ridge is receiving a grant to help start a new "Charlie's Storytime" reading program for preschoolers.
- Two Clinton High School teachers were granted money to buy books for use in reading intervention and a new "Ethics in Science Fiction" English class that relates to the recent emphasis on STEM learning.
- Clinton Middle School is receiving funds to buy graphic novels and other books for use in reading intervention.
- The Early Learning Center at Emory Valley Center was awarded a grant to buy literacy play supplies for preschoolers.
- Friends of Literacy is getting a grant toward books and "Literacy To Go" packs for Oak Ridge Preschool students to use during school breaks.
- Grand Oaks Elementary School was awarded grants for an all-school Literacy Night for students and families and for literacy and music materials for the music classroom.
- Lake City Middle School is receiving money to added to classroom libraries.
- Four Oak Ridge schools (Robertsville Middle School and Willowbrook, Woodland, and Linden Elementary Schools) teamed up to receive a grant to help pay for an author visit by children's author Raúl the Third.
- The Roane Imagination Library was awarded funds to buy Dolly Parton Imagination Library starter books for the county health department, to send home with babies when they come in for early well child visits and get signed up for the free Imagination Library.
- Willow Brook Elementary School teachers will receive grants for Osmo learning system materials for use in kindergarten and for the Edmark reading program for intervention with students who have not yet mastered beginning reading. Also, the school library was awarded a grant to buy books from the popular "Elephant and Piggie" series that is effective in helping early readers.

Co-Chair of the Lunch 4 Literacy Committee, John Roberts, said, "I am extremely appreciative of the continued support from sponsors and guests for over 30 years as we once again come together to impact literacy in our community. I look forward to experiencing a luncheon that marks the return of everyone engaged in person and hearing from the author, Mr. Brendan Slocumb, a fellow educator."

So, make plans now to attend the annual Lunch 4 Literacy Luncheon on March 19, 2024, at 11:30 AM at the Oak Ridge High School for social networking gathering and lunch. We return to our earlier format of plate lunches and an in-person speaker.

Tickets are available at Eventbrite at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lunch-for-literacy-with-brendan-slocumb-tickets-799944785387>

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