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## PRESS RELEASE

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### Newark Literary Festival Celebrates Newark's Literature and Authors



The Newark Public Library and the Forest Hill Literary Society have organized the Newark Literary Festival as part of Newark Celebration 350, with three

events at two locations, to highlight the community's writers and readers.

"I am enthusiastic to announce the Newark Literary Festival's three upcoming programs at two Newark Public Library locations. These programs celebrate Newark's long history with authors and books, and the publication of a new edition of *Newark's Literary Lights*, said interim library director Thomas Alrutz. "As a member of the Forest Hill Literary Society, which first suggested an authors' program as a 350th anniversary program, I am especially pleased about the partnership with Newark Public Library, and am grateful for the support of the PSEG Foundation and Newark Celebration 350."

The keynote event, **Literature Speaks! Newark in Print**, will feature a panel discussion with Newark authors, a reception, and author books sales and signings with local authors, to be held on Thursday, September 22 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Doors will open at 5:30 pm.

Moderating the panel discussion will be Dr. Anasa Maat, author and publisher, and Library trustee. Other panelists include Dr. John W. Johnson, Jr., newly-appointed Assistant Professor of History at St. Peter's University in Jersey City, who will speak about Newark history; Valerie Wilson Wesley, the well-known author of mysteries, adult-themed novels, and children's books,

who will speak about Newark fiction, and Guy Sterling, journalist and historian, who will speak about Newark writers.

Dr. Johnson, the former executive director of Newark Celebration 350, received his Ph.D. in American Studies from Rutgers-Newark in 2014, with a dissertation that traced the transformation of the Weequahic neighborhood of Newark from its origins as pastoral countryside to working- and middle-class neighborhood as the city grew, and of the change from a Jewish enclave to an African American community.

Valerie Wilson Wesley, best known for the Tamara Hayle mystery series, is the former executive editor of *Essence* magazine. Her fiction and nonfiction pieces have been published by the *New York Times*, *Family Circle*, *Essence*, and other publications. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Griot Award from the New York Chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists, and the Excellence in Adult Fiction award from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association.

Guy Sterling is a former *Star Ledger* reporter and the author of *The Famous, the Familiar, and the Forgotten: 350 Notable Newarkers*. Mr. Sterling has been interviewing notable Newarkers for the Newark Lifetimes: Recollections and Reflections series at the Library, as part of the Library's contribution to Newark Celebration 350.

Local authors will have copies of books available for purchase and signing, including poet John Curley, journalist and commentator Mark DiIonno, publisher and journalist Edward Jardim, journalist and music historian Barbara Kukla, and author and preservationist Catharine Longendyck, in addition to Dr. Maat, Mr. Sterling, and Ms. Wesley.

**Literature Speaks! Newark in Print** will be held in Centennial Hall on the second floor of the Main Library at 5 Washington Street in Newark.

The program is free and open to the public. For more information and to RSVP, please call 973-733-7793 or email [rsvp@npl.org](mailto:rsvp@npl.org).

Two family programs will also be part of the Newark Literary Festival with giveaways and refreshments at North End Branch Library. **Children's Literature Day: Meet the Authors!** will be held on Saturday, September 24, starting at 1:00 pm, featuring Marybell Martinez, who will speak about her new book *Preschool Blues*, Ivette Méndez, who will read from her book *A Day in the Life of La Gatita de Oro in Apt. 6-J: Salsa Dancing*, and her brother Carlos Luis Méndez, who will talk about drawing pictures for books. Books will be available for purchase and signing, and there will be an opportunity for photos with a Surprise Children's Book Character.

**North Ward History Day** will take place on Saturday, October 1, beginning at 12:00 noon, with fun activities for children and adults. Learn how this neighborhood grew from farms just 125 years ago into what you see today, and see how North Ward looked in the past during a slide presentation with historic photographs. Local author Catharine Longendyck will have copies of her books about Forest Hill and Branch Brook Park available for purchase and signing.

Both family programs are free and open to the public. Both will take place at North End Branch Library, 722 Summer Avenue. For more information, please call 973-733-7766.



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