SPRING 2021

NEWSLETTER

UPDATES FOR NEXT CHAPTER BOOK CLUB MEMBERS AND AFFILIATES

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE:

- Introduction to the new Executive Director
- Meet the Board
- Home office updates with upcoming Affiliate outreach
- Updated social media
- Travels with Tom
- Around the World
Since I was young, I have given off teacher vibes. I have never understood what it is, my face, tone, clothing, outlook; I have countless stories of strangers labeling me a teacher. In some ways, I guess I am. Maybe not by professional trade or education, but I find the greatest joy in assisting others and watching them blossom into more than they ever thought they could be. A little about me, I like to sing and dance, I enjoy spending time with my dog, I am obsessed with good TV, and I am remarkably close with my family and friends. In 2017, I graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Hawaii. I am an introverted person, but the DD population brings me out of my shell and brings me to life! I have grown with this fantastic population since childhood, and my desire to work in this field and advocate for individuals with disabilities increases with each passing year.

Previous employment opportunities have all circled the general theme of helping or teaching. In high school, I interned at a school for children of immigrant parents and refugees. The internship was in a math classroom, but the placement went further than solving math problems; I guided these students as they came to terms with a new normal and provided support and education for long-term success. For two summers, during college, I led a summer camp for adolescents with disabilities. The camp offered educational, self-advocacy, social, and physical fitness activities to help guide these youth in a much-needed time in their developmental journey.

As I continued through college, I was fortunate enough to participate in two study abroad programs, one in Seville, Spain, and the other in London, England. In my last year of college, I took on a teaching position creating a curriculum and instructing a freshman class in a sociology course. I was also a Resident Assistant, aiding three dorms with any educational, social, or health-related needs. By the time I graduated college, I had been exposed to and had the pleasure of working with people of all backgrounds, disabilities, and mental health diagnoses.
Right out of college, I was offered a position as the Manager of Quality for a day program for adults with disabilities. I then stepped into the role of Site Director at the same company. At this organization, I started self-advocacy programs like a Community Council, helped improve physical fitness with annual activities like the Olympics, increased social skills with a yearly prom, and stimulated critical thinking and further education with classes like Spanish, Pen Pal Posse, and Skills for Independence. After working at this day program for over four years, it is with great pride and excitement that I announce my new home at Chapters Ahead, becoming the new Executive Director of the Next Chapter Book Club!!!

I love NCBC because it is so welcoming to everyone (and I have already felt welcomed by those I have had the pleasure to meet thus far)! I have the heart to serve others, the capacity to grow, the determination to be better, and a fondness for a good book. I have close ties to multiple members and organizers of the first NCBC clubs, including founder Dr. Tom Fish. I will lead by their example to build upon this incredible organization's foundation. It is a pleasure to introduce myself, and I hope to meet many more members in the future! Thank you all for making NCBC great!

Desirea Strickland
Executive Director of Chapters Ahead, Inc
Meet the Board

Welcome the new, outstanding members of our community that will help take NCBC to new heights and help NCBC to achieve its mission and goals.

Dr. Tom Fish
Founder of Next Chapter Book Club and Chapters Ahead, Inc

Melissa Gourley
CEO of Ureach, LLC and Learning Never Ends, LLC

Dan Towslee
Director, Third-Party Risk: Nationwide Enterprise Risk Management

Crystal Lett
Practice Manager & Community Advocate

Amanda Smith
Chief Services Officer for ARC Industries, Inc
Home Office Updates

We at the Chapters Ahead home office would like to thank all of you for your continued support and participation in Next Chapter Book Club. We hope you are all staying safe and meeting virtually. As spring approaches it could be a good time to get back out into the community and meet at a local park or outdoor cafe! Please send us pictures to use on the website!

In need of a new book or some new merchandise? Head to our website Affiliate portal and shop!

Please be on the lookout! Surveys will be coming out via email. Surveys will be quick and will contain questions for affiliates to help give suggestions on how to enhance the program! Survey completions enter your club into a drawing for free NCBC merch!

Join Now!!

Please follow us on Instagram and Facebook to share your triumphs, memories, thoughts and catch up on the latest NCBC news! @NextChatperBookClub
Greetings everyone.

The past year certainly has been a different experience, to say the least. Indeed, the word “travel” has not been an everyday buzzword. Having been recently retired before the pandemic, the word “travel” was part of my everyday vocabulary. So, dealing with cabin fever has become a way of life.

Back in November/December of last year, I decided to do some virtual traveling; I visited some of our book clubs across the country who had been meeting virtually. Lyna and I put out an offer, and a total of 9 clubs from California, Texas, Kentucky, Ohio, and Florida invited us to join them. What a wonderful experience it was! First off, to do something like this before the pandemic would have been unthinkable. Technology has made it possible for us to share, laugh with and get to know wonderful club members and facilitators from around the country. And while there was consensus that they missed seeing one another in person, being together virtually was certainly the next best thing.

All the book club sessions were upbeat. Smiles and laughter prevailed. I felt like a real rock star when members learned that I was an author of one or more of the books they had read. Their enthusiasm was equaled by my delight from seeing how much they loved their respective book clubs. Getting to know 80 or so wonderful people who valued one another and displayed such an affection for reading together was a big-time thrill for me. Although I was not physically in places like Truckee, CA, San Antonio, TX, Louisville, Ky, Nelsonville, OH, Boca Raton, FL, it felt as though I might as well have been.

Who knows when I will hit the road again? But, in the meantime, I would love to visit other clubs that are meeting virtually. So, shoot me an email at tfish@nextchapterbookclub.org, and we will make a date. Until then, happy trails and enjoy making life real and fun.

Sincerely,
Tom Fish, Founder
NCBC was featured in an American Libraries article: A Disproportionate Pandemic Library patrons with disabilities face compounded challenges.

"While Zoom is “not the same as in person,” she says, she still calls it “a good way to do book club” and says that being able to virtually attend has helped ease the isolation of the pandemic for her: “I’m a social person. I miss all my friends.” " - Erin Freeman NCBC member.

We want to thank our Nevada County Community Library's Truckee branch for being a part of the article, representing NCBC and getting creative with meetings during the pandemic!
Check out our new book, *Something's Brewing!* NCBC readers give it 5 stars!!!

Delightful stories about navigating the ups and downs of adulthood while living with a disability. The characters' perspectives are fresh and honest as they overcome heartbreak, face disappointments, renew friendships and celebrate triumphs. An informative read for anyone who is curious about what it is like to live with a disability, or just wants a feel-good tale about the power of friendship and belonging. Found on our website. https://www.nextchapterbookclub.org/

“This is a great read for anyone who is interested in learning about how it is like to live with a disability, or just wants a feel good story about the importance of friendship and relationships.”

“Jill Ober and Tom Fish have produced yet another fabulous book! All of their books, and this is no exception, are LOVED by members of our Next Chapter Book Club.”
We Want to Hear From You!

Send us a picture, give a book recommendation, just finish a book? We want to know!

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