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## Children's Book Festival to Benefit Local Schoolchildren

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## Children’s Book Festival to Benefit Local Schoolchildren

Authors Sheila Turnage and Adam Rubin to read for first- and fifth-graders at Ford Center

MARCH 19, 2015 BY REBECCA LAUCK CLEARY



Sheila Turnage

OXFORD, Miss. – Area schoolchildren are ready for the 2015 Children’s Book Festival, held as part of the **Oxford Conference for the Book** later this month.

Sheila Turnage, author of “Three Times Lucky,” presents to the fifth-graders Monday (March 23). Adam Rubin, author of “Those Dam Squirrels,” presents to the first-graders Wednesday (March 25). Both events are at 9 a.m. in the **Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts**.

**Square Books Jr.**, on the Oxford Square, will host book signings at 4 p.m. Monday for Turnage and at 4 p.m. Wednesday for Rubin.

The goal of the Children’s Book Festival is to give each child a book of his or her own, which they read along with classmates and their teacher. Committees made up of local school librarians, teachers and representatives from the **Lafayette County Literacy Council**, which sponsors the first grade; the Junior Auxiliary of Oxford, which sponsors the fifth grade; and Square Books Jr., choose the book each year.



Adam Rubin

The literacy council places a premium on working in partnership to be more effective and responsive, and the Children’s Book Festival is an example, said Meridith Wulff, LCLC director.

“The Literacy Council’s mission is to improve the quality of life in our community through literacy and reading and the Oxford Conference for the Book’s Children’s Book Festival is an opportunity for us to help turn local first-graders into lifelong readers,” Wulff said. “In the first grade, many kids are still learning to read or just beginning to read on their own, so it’s the perfect time to really bring a book to life and show them that reading is fun.”

Turnage grew up on a farm in Eastern North Carolina and is a graduate of East Carolina University and author of several children’s books, including a Newbery Honor winner and a New York Times bestseller. Rubin quit his day job in advertising to become a full-time author after writing several children’s books that became New York Times bestsellers, including “Dragons Love Tacos.”

Junior Auxiliary members also serve as hosts for the visiting authors and spend time in the schools bringing the books to life.

“The fifth-graders all read the book together in class and then discuss it, which brings about an array of comments and discussion topics among all the students,” said Brandy Newman, librarian at Lafayette Upper Elementary School.

The festival gets kids excited about reading by seeing the author at the Ford Center, said Connie Robinson, Oxford Elementary School librarian.

“Through this experience, students become connected with books and reading because it is now a text-to-self relationship instead of a text-to-text,” Robinson said. “In the classroom, students will participate in activities such as creating a story map, comparing and contrasting it to other books, a bird drawing activity and creating bird costumes.”

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OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children’s play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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The 22nd annual Oxford Conference for the Book, presented by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and Square Books, is dedicated to Mississippi writer Margaret Walker. All sessions are free and open to the public. For a full schedule of events, visit <http://oxfordconferenceforthebook.com>.

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