

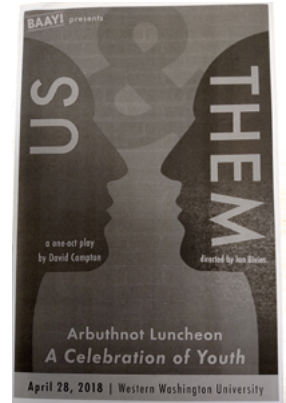
Arbuthnot Luncheon: Feast for the Mind and Soul

A special luncheon, celebrating young people and expression, was held on April 28, prior to the Arbuthnot Honor Lecture. The event showcased the literary and dramatic talents of Whatcom County youth in presentations that often touched on themes of peace and finding common ground, which perfectly underscored and complemented the work of Naomi Shihab Nye, 2018 Arbuthnot lecturer.

A one-act play was performed by BAAY: Bellingham Arts Academy for Youth. “Us & Them,” written by David Campton and directed by Ian Bivins, portrayed the story of two neighboring groups who arrive in the same space and proceed to build a wall to keep their communities separate. The drama, performed by 13 to 18-year-olds, brought into focus what unites people and what keeps them apart.

The lunch and program would not have been complete without poetry, of course, and there was plenty to be enjoyed. Numerous young poets from Whatcom County read their works, among them Mia Clarke and Emma McCoy, whose poems appear in *A Forest of Words: 2018 Poetry Anthology*, and Lily Patterson and Jessica Jimenez, two winners of the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center’s (WDRC) 2018 Youth Peace Poetry

Contest, which encourages young writers to explore through poetry themes like apologizing, listening, building peace, and anti-bullying. *A Forest of Words* is a print collection of original poetry by young people in grades six through twelve, published by Teen Services of Whatcom County Library System and distributed to area schools and libraries.



“The voices of the young people speaking truth were a profound tonic to all present,” said Nye. “The play was eerily prescient in light of our current moment—walls and breaking up of immigrant families and racism and all the sorrows abounding. I felt as if the luncheon cleansed and refreshed our spirits beyond measure, gave testament to what honest, beautiful, brave voices can do.”

Luncheon guests enjoyed an engaging and lively afternoon of community, the ideal refreshment and precursor to the special evening ahead. ☺

About May Hill Arbuthnot

The May Hill Arbuthnot Lecture is an annual event featuring an author, critic, librarian, historian, or teacher of children’s literature, of any country, who shall prepare a paper considered to be a significant contribution to the field of children’s literature. This paper is delivered as a lecture each April or May, and is subsequently published in *Children and Libraries*, the journal of ALSC.

May Hill Arbuthnot (1884–1969) was born in Mason City, Iowa, and graduated from the University of Chicago in 1922, receiving her master’s degree in 1924 from Columbia University. Along with educator William Scott Gray, she created and wrote the Curriculum Foundation Readers—better known as the “Dick and Jane” series—for children published by Scott, Foresman and Company (now Pearson Scott Foresman).

Her greatest contribution to children’s literature, however, was her authorship of *Children and Books*, the first edition of which

was published in 1947. In 1927, she joined the faculty of Case Western Reserve University, and there she met and married Charles Arbuthnot, an economics professor. She also served as editor of both *Childhood Education* and *Elementary English*. Her other works include *The Arbuthnot Anthology of Children’s Literature* and *Children’s Books Too Good to Miss*.

To link Arbuthnot’s name with an oratory award makes perfect sense. When accepting the award in 1969, she recalled “that long stretch of years when I was dashing from one end of the country to the other, bringing children and books together by way of the spoken word.” She also affirmed, “I am a strong believer in the efficacy of direct speech.... a forthright vigorous lecture can set fire to a piece of literature that had failed to come to life from the printed page.” She was thrilled at the prospect of this award providing a forum for “new voices speaking with new insight and new emphasis in the field of children’s lectures.” (Quote from *The Arbuthnot Lectures, 1970–79*, ALA/ALSC, 1980.) ☺