

“Happy Days” Star To Speak About Learning Disability

Dyslexia got him labeled as an underachiever. Hard work and talent made him a star. Now, Henry Winkler, best known as Fonzie on the long running television show “Happy Days,” is coming to Scranton to tell about his school experience and the books he has written for young people.

Winkler, the final speaker in the Lackawanna County Library System’s 2005 Library Lecture Series, will appear on Saturday, November 5, at 7 p.m. in the Scranton Cultural Center.

He and co-author Lin Oliver have received praise from parents, educators, librarians and loyal young readers for their Hank Zipzer books, a series of six novels featuring a high-spirited boy who has trouble learning.

With titles like “Niagara Falls Or Does It” and “The Night I Flunked My Field Trip,” the Zipzer books treat disability as a difference, not a problem, and show the humor of the hero’s efforts to overcome it.

Born and raised in New York City, Winkler’s own dyslexia did not prevent him from getting an education. He’s a graduate of Emerson College in Boston and earned a master’s degree at the Yale School of Drama. And it didn’t get in the way of his success as an actor, either.

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Winkler never tried to hide his learning disability. He convinced the producers of “Happy Days” to make Fonzie dyslexic, which became part of the character’s humanity.

After “Happy Days” went off the air, he went on to become a producer and director of family and children’s programming and continued his acting career in movies and television. His movie credits include roles in “Nightshift,” “The Waterboy” and

“Holes.” He is currently appearing in a new CBS sitcom, “Out of Practice.”

“We are extremely happy to have Henry Winkler come to Lackawanna County and talk about his books,” said Mary Garm, Library System administrator. “In addition to creating an icon of contemporary American culture in “the Fonz,” he is an inspiration to young people who struggle with learning.”

Mrs. Garm said that the Library System hopes that children will fill the audience for Winkler, along with their parents.

In addition to his writing, Winkler works with a number of children's welfare groups including **the MacLaren Children's Center** (a facility for abused children), **the National Committee for Arts for the Handicapped, Special Olympics**, and **the Los Angeles Music Center's Very Special Arts Festival**.

He also has a strong involvement in teenage alcohol and drug abuse programs. He is a founding member of the **Children's Action Network**, a non-profit organization that sponsors informational briefings for writers, producers and directors on children's issues and serves as a clearing-house for the entertainment industry on children's issues.

The Library Lecture Series began in April with a talk by novelist Phillip Margolin. Cookbook author and television host David Rosengarten spoke in July. James Rosen, the State Department and Washington correspondent for the Fox News Channel, was guest speaker in September.

A committee of librarians from the seven community libraries in the county system planned the series using circulation figures and frequently requested topics to guide their choices.

The lecture series is supported by the Lackawanna County Office of Education and Culture and is part of the art, literature and performance collaboration of the Lackawanna County Library System, the Scranton Cultural Center and the Everhart Museum.

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According to Garm, tickets will be required for admission to the event. They can be obtained by showing a valid library card at any Lackawanna County Library System library, the Scranton Cultural Center box office or the Everhart Museum.