

Local bookstore highlighting diverse voices, supporting Black Community



Hailing from a Persian background, local book lover Loba Fallah knows all too well the importance of highlighting and promoting diverse voices ? and that's exactly what she's doing at Bookworms & Company.

Bookworms & Company, a bookstore located in St. Andrew's Village at the corner of Yonge and Orchard Heights Boulevard, opened this past fall challenging the idea of a traditional bookstore.

Her aim was to create ?a little home for people locally where they can come, where they can chat,? and, once COVID restrictions are fully lifted, where they can gather to celebrate a love for the written word and eclectic voices.

?I don't want to just necessarily be a place where you can come and pick up a book and it's a faceless store,? says Fallah. ?We want it to be a place where people get to know each other, where people can have book clubs, reading time, story time, and just a social hour for parents or teenagers, and everyone else as well.?

It is through this idea of creating a space where people can get to know each other that Bookworms & Company became involved with the Aurora Black Community Association (ABC).

Throughout Black History Month, the store is sharing an array of books written by Black voices, with 10 per cent of the proceeds from each sale through February going to the ABC's I Can Swim program.

?In Canada, immigrants are less likely to learn to swim or to participate recreationally,? says the ABC of the initiative. ?Most Canadian newcomers come from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. With the stereotype that most assume that coming from the Caribbean coming from water, we must all be fish or expert swimmers [but] that is not the reality. We aim to fund swimming lessons for ten families ? adults and children ? who want to learn swimming, a life skill that all should have.?

Fallah's aim is to not only support the program but introduce local readers to voices they might not have previously enjoyed.

?This just came naturally to also be able to promote Black History Month and bring over all the diverse voices, from fiction to non-fiction, to children, to everything else ? even a jigsaw puzzle I found,? she says. ?We want to help the community and work with local organizations and companies; I have been doing that anyway with a lot of other things as well in terms of trying to feature local authors, local makers and artists and everything else as well, so this just came naturally.

?I have lived in Aurora for seven years. I am still learning about all the different organizations. People come in and suggest different

things and I understand it more and understand this may be in line with what I want to do and go forward with it.?

Among the books highlighted in their display are '28 Days: Moments in Black History that Changed the World' by Charles R. Smith, 'The Black History Book: Big Ideas Simply Explained', 'Becoming,' the memoir of former U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama, 'The Autobiography of Malcolm X?', and two of her own personal favourites, 'What I Know for Sure' by Oprah Winfrey and 'The Momba Mentality: How I Play' by the late basketball great Kobe Bryant.

'I only have three books on my bedside table and two of those are 'What I Know for Sure' and 'The Momba Mentality,' says Fallah. 'They are filled with little life lessons you can pick up and read a little bit every day. Both of those books are the types you can crack open to any page and find something that resonates with you. It gives you a little more insight and takes you away from your current problems and makes you step back and look at it from a different perspective. That's what I find good about these books, 'Momba Mentality' especially because of the way he approaches life ' and with Oprah, the amount of adversity she went through just to become who she is now.'

For more on Bookworms & Co. visit www.bookwormsco.com or call 905-750-0130.

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