

# A taste of the Writers' Festival

By Rebecca Ring

Festival-goers must pick and choose which authors they hear reading, as it is impossible to catch every one. Some people may not have been able to attend at all, so the following is a sample of what was enjoyed at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Eden Mills Writer's Festival last Sunday.

Among the authors was Jerrod Edson. He read from his newly published, soon-to-be-released, third novel, *A Place of Pretty Flowers*. He describes it as the story of a young man who dies in a car crash and the devastation of the survivors.

"It begins at the funeral, where the mourners discover the hole has not been dug. Through the funeral procession, I introduce the characters," says Edson. The novel then goes back five days, and stories within the story are told, and it ends back at the funeral.

The novel is set in Saint John, New Brunswick, where Edson was born and raised. After living in Asia and Europe, Edson now lives in Mississauga. His other novels are *The Making of Harry Cossaboom* and *The Dirty Milkman*.

Rawi Hage read from his first novel, *DeNiro's Game*.

Which was shortlisted for the Giller Prize, the Governor General's Award and The First Book Regional Commonwealth Award to name a few. It won the Quebec Federation's McAuslan First Book Prize and the Paragraphe Hugh MacLennan Prize for fiction. The novel is set in Lebanon during the civil war. Two young men, best friends, begin to commit petty crimes for different reasons. One wants to make enough money to leave while the other wants to make a living and gain power.

"The book is an expose of Lebanon during the war. It's an inside look at civil war and militarism with its migration, displacement, crime, culture shock and failed relationships," says Hage.

The excerpts Hage read include a story that one of the young men told the other about fate. An agonized mother came to her son in a military camp and begged and pleaded with him to come home. He pushed her, called her a crazy old woman and told her to leave. His leader saw this, and said that he will not tolerate such rude and

disrespectful behaviour, so he sent him home. At home, the mother is relieved, and prepares a bath for her son. While he is in the tub, the house is bombed, and her son is killed. She goes crazy with grief and never bathes again.

Hage says he was honoured to read at the festival and would happily come again. Born in Beirut, he came to Canada in 1992 at 15 years old. He now lives in Montreal.

Janice Kulyk Keefer read from her latest novel *Ladies Lending Library*. It is set in Ontario's cottage country in 1963. The women, who live there all summer with their children while their husbands work in the city during the week, begin trading books amongst each other. As a result, they begin to imagine other, larger lives for themselves. Books such as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *The World of Suzy Wong*, and *Valley of the Dolls* and the popular film *Cleopatra*, starring volatile lovers Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, help to create a secret language of possibilities among the women.

Keefer says she is fascinated by fault lines and fissures in cultures and societies that mark great changes. Lives other than as good wives and mothers were opening up to women.

Tuesday, September 18 the Rockwood Ontario Early Year's gang is heading to Andrew's Scenic Acres for some fall fun! Come and join us and experience the straw maze, a wagon ride, the petting coral and more! We are meeting there at 10 a.m. and the cost is \$2. If you are interested in coming, please call Jane at 519-856-2113 to register. Don't forget your camera!

Paper, Scissors, Glue! – It is time to get creative and imaginative! For four weeks, beginning Tuesday, Oct 2 from 10-11 a.m. join other children aged 2+ to make crafts using paper, scissors, glue and more. The program will run as a drop-in, so come in and see what you can create! For more information, please call Jane at 519-856-2113.

The Moon is Round – From Oct 9-Dec 4 (9 weeks) from 1-2 p.m. this amazing program will be running for parents and their babies' birth to 12 months. We will teach you songs, rhymes and finger plays that you will use with your baby during mealtime, bath time, while driving and waiting in lines. It is one of our most popular programs and you won't want to miss



**PROMISING POET:** Nathalie Tomaiuolo reads from her poem, *Life of Ethereal Nature*, at the Eden Mills Writers' Festival. She won second place in her grade category in the Ishar Singh Poetry Contest. The thirteen-year old, grade eight student lives in Newmarket. *Rebecca Ring Photo*

Children were beginning to see parents as human, with all their discoveries, betrayals and exploration.

"It was both disconcerting and liberating as relationships between husbands and wives, and parents and children were changing in the 60s," says Keefer. She had spent time in cottage country with her aunt and uncle as a child and teenager in that era. In her book, she revisits that lost country of childhood and summer holidays.

Keefer, a Professor at University of Guelph at Humber, lived in Eden Mills for about 10 years. During that time, she became friends with festival founders Leon and Connie Rooke. She recently dedicated a collection of poetry to Connie, who is liv-

ing with a life-threatening illness. Keefer describes her as a phenomenal, voracious reader. She was editor of a literary journal, *Malahat Review*, in which Keefer was first published. She was head of the English Department at University of Guelph, co-founded the festival, and mentored many women, especially those returning to academia after raising children.

"I remember walking into her backyard in Eden Mills to find her reading. She rarely had time for herself, so it struck me as a very intimate and beautiful scene." Her poem *Reading* captures this moment and how, for Connie, "whose arms always open in greeting. ...nothing disturbs these words, travelling the blue roads of her eyes."

## EWAG NEWS

it. Call Jane at 519-856-2113 to register today!

Memoir Writing Coming to Rockwood Library - A six week session of memoir writing with Nora Zylstra-Savage will begin on Thursday, September 13 at 9 a.m. at the Rockwood Library. The cost is \$65. Learn how to easily bring forth precious memories and get them on paper. These memories are the best connection to the past and important to share with your family and especially your grandchildren. The course will provide information and practice on how to organize and get started, writing, sharing and receiving lots of support, feedback and encouragement in a fun-filled, creative writing environment. If you can write a letter, you can write your memoirs! Call Mary Ellen at 519-833-0087 to register today!

Tai Chi Returning This Fall – The fall session of tai chi will begin on Wednesday, September 12 and will run for

10 weeks. The classes will be held at St. John's Anglican Church, Rockwood from 2:30-3:30. The fee is \$60 for the 10 week session. For more information or to register, please call Mary Ellen at 519-833-0087.

Fall Fashion Show – Wednesday, September 26 at 7 p.m. Century Church Theatre, Hillsburgh. Don't miss this annual show and sale of EWAG's BEST gently-used fall fashions at bargain prices. Tickets are \$15 (\$10 for EWAG members) and are available at EWAG Shops in Erin, Hillsburgh and Rockwood. The evening includes door prizes, raffles, gift bags and refreshments.

Location and Hours - The EWAG Community Support Services office and thrift shop is located at 106 Church Street and is open Monday – Thursday from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. The Thrift Shop is also open Fridays and Saturdays from noon until 4 p.m. We offer a variety of Government forms, laminating, copying, faxing services and much more. Call for more information at 519-856-2113. We are also on the web at [www.e-wag.on.ca](http://www.e-wag.on.ca)

Please note the office is not open on Fridays



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