

# Crowds Throng First-Ever Festival

By Mitchell Trinka

The first ever Millbrook Book Festival took a long time to come to fruition. It's been in the works for more than a year and a half, but all that hard work and planning paid off as people from all over the county made their way to the village for two days of sun, fun and books.

Things kicked off on May 16 at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies, where festival patrons helped the institute celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Participants heard from the Nature and Science Panel with featured speaker, Andrew Revkin environmental reporter for the New York Times.

There were also tours of the labs on site and demonstrations of experiments. One experiment showed how polluted air is heavier than clean air, proving the fact to onlookers by pouring dirty water from a cup to a waiting receptacle.

On May 17, there were activities from one end of the village to the other, beginning at 8:30 a.m. with a pancake breakfast at Grace Church. Along with panel discussions and reading by the numerous authors in Millbrook for the event, there was a parade starting at Grace Church and ending at the Millbrook Library after weaving through sleepy village streets.

One participant in the parade, Alex Pandaleon, brought both of his children to the festival and walked with them in the parade, which featured Willy the Fire Jeep. He said he found out about the festival mostly through his daughter's preschool class at Grace Church and was happy with what he saw when they got there.

"It was a great activity for the kids," said Pandaleon.

Pandaleon said he also enjoyed being able to take his children for storytelling at the library. He said the most fun, though, was during the parade, adding that it was a lot of fun for his children to be able to wear their Halloween costume a second time. He added that they also were intrigued when they were allowed to touch Willy and sound his sirens.

"It was loads of fun," said Pandaleon, noting that it allowed his children to have a day of fun outside of school with their friends. He said if he planned the pilot event he would be please with how well it went.

"I would not be disappointed at all. It's what makes small town life something to treasure," said Pandaleon.

Supervisor Florence Prisco also said she was pleased with what she saw over the two days of the event. She said the festival was wonderful, adding that she talked to people who attending lectures and said they had a great time.

"I thought the event went great. I hope they continue the tradition," said Prisco.

She said she hopes that local people not only bring back this event next year, but also see that the town and village need more events like this to keep their vitality.

She said the organizers worked long and hard and were willing to go out on a limb to do something new, adding that they should be commended for their innovative thinking.

“These are good events for the life of Millbrook,” said Prisco.

Scott Meyer, one of the people who initiated the festival, said he was pleased at the draw of the festival, adding that many of the authors said the festival was one of the best writers’ events they had ever participated in.

He said particular thanks go to the large committee whose members helped organize the event, noting that they made sure to get all the local stores involved and not overlook anyone.

Meyer added that the high school helpers, who gave maps, information, and advice to patrons of the festival, were also a big plus to the weekend.

“It was just amazing, all aspects of it went off really well. I think that’s something to really build on,” said Meyer.

He said, as with any event, there were a handful of complaints, but most people were eager to give only positive feedback on the festival. He said everyone involved was tired, but happy to have seen such a good event happen.

Meyer said the committee won’t be meeting for a couple of weeks to allow everyone to decompress.

He said when they do meet everyone will bring their thoughts and new ideas to improve the event. He said it took a long time to organize, but it should be quicker and easier to maintain the next time.

“We tried to do the best that we could,” said Meyer.