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## **Catawba County BIG READ Brings Community Together Around One Story**

**Newton, NC – Catawba County Library System** – There are few events designed to gather an entire community around one common theme, and that’s one reason that the Big Read - Catawba County is so big. The Big Read is a national program which cultivates one topic, idea, and conversation through one book in one community.

The Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in partnership with Arts Midwest designed to restore reading to the center of American culture. The Big Read brings together partners across communities to encourage reading for pleasure and enrichment.

During February, March, and April of 2016, Catawba County is one of hundreds of nationwide communities that will participate in the Big Read. Catawba County will read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the Pulitzer Prize winner written by Harper Lee.

Eight weeks of community wide events will kick off on February 23, 2016 at the Catawba Valley Community College Black History Celebration, in the CVCC Tarlton Complex from 6 to 8pm. The Big Read project will wrap up with six productions of *To Kill a Mockingbird* at the Green Room Community Theatre in Newton April 8-17<sup>th</sup>. Along with many opportunities for sharing and discussing the book and its themes, there will be a Reading Marathon with local celebrities, such as author Joyce Hostetter, reading excerpts from the book at Valley Hills Mall on Saturday, February 27<sup>th</sup>. There will also be a free admission day at the historic Murray’s Mill on Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, and several guest appearances by Mary Badham, the actress who played Scout in the 1962 movie *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

The library will also host a companion read and discussion of Bryan Stevenson’s *Just Mercy*, a powerful work by the founder of the Equal Justice Initiative recounting his experiences as a lawyer working to assist those desperately in need, and reflecting on his pursuit of the ideal of compassion in American justice.

In addition to free copies of *To Kill a Mockingbird* that will be available at community events, copies will also be available throughout the county in random locations. So, you might find a brown paper bag with a quote from the book at your favorite local hangout, doctor’s office, or store. At the conclusion of this project, Big Read partners will have put 1,300 English and 200 Spanish copies of this timeless classic into the hands of Catawba County readers.

All through the month of March there will be a photo contest in which members of the community are encouraged to take pictures of places, objects, buildings, trees, or other images that remind them of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Whether you consider yourself a pro photographer, or just someone who likes taking photos with your phone, the contest will be a fun and engaging way to experience the Big Read.

Citizens can post as many photos as they like to Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram using #catcobigread. Throughout the month, the Catawba County Library System will be tracking the hash tag and re-posting photos on the library's social media platforms. At the end of March, those who follow the library's social media will have the opportunity to vote on their favorite photos. Winning photographers will receive prizes including a Kindle Fire or tickets to the Green Room productions of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

The Big Read of Catawba County is made possible through the partnership between the Catawba County Library, Catawba Valley Community College, Hickory Library, Lenoir-Rhyne University, the Green Room Community Theatre and the Catawba County Historical Association. The Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest. Additional support has been provided by the United Arts Council of Catawba County through the North Carolina Arts Council.

To learn more about the Big Read and the National Endowment for the Arts visit [neabigread.org](http://neabigread.org).

For more detailed information about Catawba County Big Read events visit [newsletter.catawbacountync.gov/library/](http://newsletter.catawbacountync.gov/library/).

For the latest in library news, visit <http://newsletter.catawbacountync.gov/library/> or stop by your local branch.

**About:** *The Catawba County Library is our community's place to connect, explore, and grow. We empower lives and build our community by bringing people, information, and ideas together. The library, headquartered in Newton, serves the community with seven locations throughout the county and is a year-round, integral provider of early literacy and lifelong learning resources and programming. The library also provides a full complement of computer and digital services, classes, and support to bridge the digital divide, empower job seekers, and enhance community quality of life and economic health.*

