

# Guide to the READER'S FEAST

## BOOKSTORE Papers

1983-1995

Collection Number: 6

Special Collections Department

Elihu Burritt Library

Compiled by: Francis Gagliardi

Date Completed Jan., 2007

### DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Title:

READER'S FEAST BOOKSTORE Papers, 1983-1995

Collection Number: 6

Creator:

Tollie Miller

Quantity:

5 inches

Forms of Material:

Subject files, correspondence, notes, flyers, printed material, photographs

Repository:

Special Collections Department, Central Connecticut State University

Restrictions:

None

History:

**From the press release of November 20, 1983**

## COMMUNITY VENTURE GETS A DELICIOUS START

What do Gloria Steinem, James Baldwin, thirty local investors and Gruyere cheese have in common? They will all be represented in the grand opening on Saturday, November 26, of a new, community-owned bookstore café called The Readers Feast, at 529 Farmington Avenue in Hartford.

The combined bookstore and restaurant will be the first of its kind in the area, offering a selection of books ranging from traditional fiction, cookbooks and children's books to the latest feminist, gay and lesbian, Spanish language and progressive political titles, as well as a gourmet menu featuring light lunches and dinners, home-baked desserts and freshly brewed coffee, cappuccino and espresso.

The venture is also unique because it is owned by thirty local people who have pooled their capital and their ideas to create what they hope will be a new community gathering place. The investors are a multi-cultural group of women and men, including several professors from the University of Connecticut School of Social Work, attorneys from the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union, community organizers from local groups, an artist and a gourmet cook. Since purchasing the store on October 1, all the investors plus a host of the other friends and supporters have put in many hours ordering and unpacking new books, painting signs, cleaning the store and helping with renovations in preparation for the grand re-opening on Thanksgiving weekend.

We wouldn't have been able to pull all this together without the volunteer help of so many friends, said Carolyn Gabel, president and Co-Manager of The Readers Feast. This really is a group effort, because all of these people care about what were trying to do. We want to create an alternative community resource in Hartford with books that represent different points of view and different cultural perspectives. And we want people to be able to relax and enjoy good food in a comfortable, open place.

Gabel, a former professor at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work, is joined at the store by Tollie Miller, Co-Manager and also an investor, and they are combining all of their skills as feminist and political activists to plan small events at the bookstore cafe, such as readings, musical performances, small theatre presentations, and political meetings or talks.

Lisa Kuller, who formerly worked in the kitchen of The Garden of Eating, will be the restaurant Manager at The Reader's Feast, and is preparing a variety of fresh breads, sandwiches, soups, salads, and ? of course home-made desserts. The menu will feature

not only her own culinary creations, but the best of several other local chefs who will cook and bake for the restaurant. Kuller's motto, which appears on the cover of the menu, is taken from Virginia Woolf: One cannot think well, sleep well, or love well unless one has dined well.

The Reader's Feast will be celebrating its grand opening with the public on Saturday, November 26, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. The day will include complimentary snacks, fresh foods, and a new and exciting selection of books, cards, calendars and records. In addition, there will be the Hartford opening for an exhibit of the Cambridge Women's Quilts, which will be hanging in the store throughout the month of December. Beginning at 5 p.m., there will be entertainment by local artists including the Topaz classical Trio, Calliope Feminist Theatre, David Sutherland, Leslie Brett, Mary Zayas, Bread and Roses, and a special appearance by Marcia Taylor of Boston (her album is available at the store).

The Reader's Feast bookstore and restaurant promises to be a very special community gathering place, and an exciting addition to Hartford's West End.

The arrival of the large national bookstore chain's resulted in reduced sales. The struggle to run the bookstore during this difficult period resulted in Carolyn and Tollie stepping down in 1995.

Under the new management of Barbara Mase, Roberta Collins, and Valerie de Palma, the bookstore continued to operate for a few more years.

## Description

### **BOX 1:**

Folder 1: American Bookseller' Association, TLS (08/31/1993) and certificate

Folder 2: Benefit for Liberation Struggle in South Africa, September 20, 1985

Folder 3: Charter Oak Celebrates Reader's Feast, 1995

Folder 4: Field Trip to Reader's Feast, February, 1994 [14 photographs of school children' visit]

Folder 5: Gay Pride Day, Reader's Feast, Float/Booth in Park, June 1992 [photographs]

Folder 6: Grand Opening Celebration, November 26, 1983 [flyer].

Folder 7: Haymarket People' Fund, \$500 grant, August 28, 1984 [correspondence]

Folder 8: I Love the Reader's Feast [bumper sticker]

Folder 9: Independent versus Chains Bookstore Battle, 1993-1995

Folder 10: Kitchen Staff Reader's Feast [5 photographs], 1987, 1989

Folder 11: (Leap) Legislative Electoral Action Program, 1995 Annual Dinner Celebration, November 17, 1995, invitation, program book

Folder 11A: Malaprop's Bookstore, The Birth of the Independent, Summer, 1993

Folder 12: Reader's Feast Anniversary Celebrations, 1985 [flyers]

Folder 13: Reader's Feast Advertisements

Folder 14: Reader's Feast [articles about] 1983-1994

Folder 15: Reader's Feast Beginnings, 1983

Folder 16: Reader's Feast Cafe Menus

Folder 17: Reader's Feast Calendar of Events

Folder 18: Reader's Feast Changes Owners, 1995

Folder 19: Reader's Feast Community Meeting Minutes, 1984

Folder 20: Reader's Feast Grand Opening [3 photographs]

Folder 21: Reader's Feast Order Forms, 1988-1989

Folder 22: Reader's Feast Song, 1983/84

Folder 23: Reader's Feast 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events, 1993

Folder 24: Reader's Feast 12<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events, October 1, 1995 [flyers]

Folder 25: Reader's Feast [41 photographs]

Folder 26: Postcards [3] To Tollie Miller from Carole, 1995

Folder 27: Student artwork [exhibited in Reader's Feast] [20 drawings]