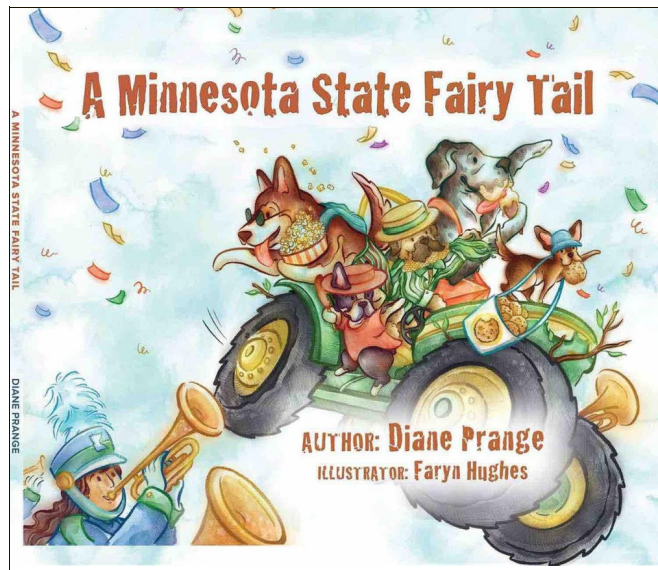


Readers and Writers



Spots for young readers at the Fair, and a butter-carving memoir



What could be more fun at the Fair than reading to a friendly therapy dog? That's the treat awaiting fairgoers Wednesday, Aug. 31, from 9 a.m. to noon when Diane Prange brings her dogs Nevsky and Cooper to the Pet Pavilions on Underwood Street for Read to a Breed, an event where youngsters read to Prange's dogs, who star in her goofy and lots-of-fun new picture book "A Minnesota State Fairy Tail" (Book Baby, \$19.95).

Prange, who lives in Minneapolis, is owner of North Star Therapy Dogs. She has owned and trained several Siberian Husky therapy dogs, all of which are registered with Pet Partners, the nation's premier therapy animal organization. St. Paul-based artist Faryn Hughes' illustrations are filled with energy that fuels the story.

"A Minnesota State Fairy Tail" is an exuberant romp by five dogs who prance, jiggle, hop and wiggle as they explore the Fairgrounds. They ride the Giant Ferris Wheel and try the Supersized Slide. Dressed as fairgoers in sunglasses and hats, they find the Gigantic Sling-together and start their own band, The Rolling Bones. In the Dairy Building two of them — OH NO — take bites of the Princess Kay Butterhead. And when they get to Read to a Breed, the human kids cheer and welcome them.

The book is available at local retailer Good Things' website, shopgoodthings.com.

Loving letters

ABC and the other letters take center stage at The Alphabet Forest, a shady little corner in Baldwin Park where young readers can play alphabet games, make a word banner, learn facts about Fair food by doing the Minnesota Agriculture Crossword Puzzle, write poems, and hear Blue Ribbon local authors read every day from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Featured authors and illustrators include Catherine Timmesch, Artika R. Tyner, Tran Thi Minh Phuc, Daniel Bernstrom, Cheryl Blackford, Tracy Nelson Maurer, Lindsey McDivitt, Thomas Peacock, Mark Celley and



Stories About the Minnesota Butterheads and Much More
LINDA CHRISTENSEN



Cooper is one of the dogs who will be at the Aug. 31 Read to a Breed event at the 2022 State Fair.

Rachel Smoka-Richardson, Dawn Quigley, Sarah Warren, and Megan Maynor. The Forest was started in 2010 by artist Debra Frasier, who was artist-in-residence and became intrigued by the variety of colorful lettering on Fair buildings and rides. That led to her book "A Fabulous Fair Alphabet," the basis for the Forest's first year. Frasier created the Forest with little more than

her imagination, used furniture and the enthusiasm of her volunteers. Nobody expected it to last more than a year, but kids and parents still find the place where everybody loves letters.

All About Butterheads
Nothing says Minnesota State Fair like the Butterheads sculptures of Prin-

cess Kay of the Milky Way. For 50 years fairgoers watched Linda Christensen work her butter magic with that year's Princess Kay. She worked in a glass, rotating cooler in which the temperature was 40 degrees. Both she and the princesses wore their heavy winter clothes.

Christensen retired in 2021 after spending uncounted hours in that cooler, during which she carved 41,500 pounds of butter into the likenesses of more than 550 young women involved in dairy farming.

Now Christensen relives her Fair memories in her new book "Princess Kay & Me: Stories About the Minnesota Butterheads and Much More" (Kirk House Publishers, \$18.95).

Some of the folks who crowded around Christensen's cooler at the Fair probably didn't know she has a fine arts degree from Minneapolis College of Art and Design and a master of arts in theology from the University of St. Catherine. She's been an art teacher, calligrapher and designer and marketer of her own line of greeting cards.

Christensen's anecdotes about her butter sculpting are charming, sometimes funny, like when a finished sculpture fell on its face when the stand broke. In her history of butter carving, she points out that Tibetan monks for centuries created intricate mandalas with brightly-colored yak butter as part of religious ceremonies.

In Minnesota, the first examples of "decorative butter" intended to promote the dairy industry were the work of farm women during the mid-1800s. "They entered their products in county fair competitions, and the practice of molding or imprinting their butter grew out of these competitions," she writes.

Christensen had a natural connection to the princesses because she grew up on a farm as they did. One of her interesting chapters is about how rural meets urban at the Fair.

For those who love the Great Minnesota Get-Together, this book would be a comforting read in winter, when it seems like August and the Fair will never come.

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