

July 1, 2010

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Author Rebecca Skloot to discuss 'Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks' during September visit to St. Bonaventure

Rebecca Skloot, author of the All Bonaventure Reads (ABR) selection for 2010-2011, "The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks," will discuss her best-selling book during a September visit to campus.

Skloot will give a free public lecture at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 29, in the Reilly Center Arena. Small group discussions with St. Bonaventure students are also planned for her visit.

"The Immortal Life" is the enthralling story of Henrietta Lacks, the forgotten woman behind one of the most important tools in modern medicine, and of Lacks's descendants, many of whom feel betrayed by the scientific establishment. Lacks's cancerous cells — the first to grow and survive indefinitely in culture — revolutionized medical research.

The book speaks to many themes — medical ethics, scientific research, the experience of African Americans in the second half of the 20th century, and the availability and cost of health care.

"Importantly, the book speaks to the Franciscan values underlying an SBU education, and we believe that the students in the incoming Class of 2014 will have a rich opportunity to explore those values as they discuss the book in classes this fall," said Dr. Nancy Casey, director of the First-Year Experience program.

The book will be distributed at summer Orientation sessions to first-year students, along with a reading guide prepared by the University's ABR committee. Students will be asked to read the book and reflect on it prior to the start of school. Students will engage in conversations and activities throughout Orientation, Welcome Days, University 101 courses and various campuswide events during the 2010-2011 academic year.

St. Bonaventure Provost Dr. Michael J. Fischer is asking all incoming students, as their first official college assignment, to write a one- to two-page reflection on the book. A group of faculty and staff will read each paper and select a group of winning essays. Winners will be recognized in the fall and will have the chance to meet Skloot when she comes to campus in September. Other activities for the fall semester include an All Bonaventure Views movie festival.

Colleagues across campus collaborated to create engaging ARB 10 orientation and fall programming. For a Where

in the World Is Henrietta Lacks campaign, the Lacks family granted permission to use their personal photo of Henrietta, featured on the book's cover, from which a life-sized Henrietta cutout was fashioned; this model will trek around campus to emphasize the worldwide magnitude of her cells' impact.

"The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks" took Skloot more than a decade to research and write. The book, published Feb. 2 by Crown, an imprint of Random House, debuted at No. 5 on the New York Times bestseller list Feb. 21. Born in 1920 in Clover, Va., Henrietta Lacks was a poor tobacco farmer who worked the same land as her slave ancestors.

In 1951, she developed a strangely aggressive cancer, and doctors at Johns Hopkins Hospital took a tissue sample without her knowledge. She died without knowing that her cells would become immortal — the first to grow and survive indefinitely in culture.

HeLa cells, as they are called, were essential to developing the polio vaccine. They have aided in the development of in-vitro fertilization, cloning, and gene mapping, and have helped us to better understand the workings of cancer and innumerable viruses. Even today, HeLa is the most widely used cell line in labs worldwide, bought and sold by the billions.

An excerpt from the book appeared in the February issue of "O, The Oprah Magazine," and Oprah Winfrey plans to collaborate with television producer Alan Ball to make an HBO film based on the best-selling book. Members of the All Bonaventure Reads Committee are Mary Jo Brockel, Christopher Brown, Nancy Casey, Eric Danielson, Jean Ehman, Carol Fischer, Ann Lehman, Adriane Spencer and Ann Tenglund.

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Mt. Irenaeus offers six-week Summer Evenings of Re-Creation series

Mt. Irenaeus, the Franciscan Mountain Retreat in Allegany County, launched its six-week Summer Evenings of Re-Creation series on Wednesday, June 30.

"Peace" is the recurring theme in this summer's weekly series that invites participants to attend Mass, share a dish-to-pass supper, then congregate for reflection and discussion around a particular topic.

"We will focus on the theme of 'Peace Be With You: The Spirit of Christ Renews the Church and the World,'" said Br. Kevin Kriso, O.F.M., a member of the friar community at Mt. Irenaeus and coordinator of the summer series. "Within a world full of economic, political, ecological and religious turmoil, how can one get a handle on things? The answer is in the message of Jesus: Peace be with you," said Br. Kevin.

All sessions are free and open to everyone, regardless of religious affiliation. In fact, diversity is encouraged. "We enjoy a diverse group of people to help broaden our discussion," said Br. Kevin.

Each Wednesday evening session begins with Mass at 4:45 p.m., followed by a dish-to-pass supper at 6 p.m. The group will then adjourn to the Chapel at 7:30 p.m. for discussion about that week's topic.

The dates and topics of the Summer Evenings of Re-Creation series include:

June 30: Peace Be With You

July 7: Peace in the Midst of Chaos

July 14: The Cosmic Christ: Finding Your Direction Magnetically

July 21: Peace in the Family

July 28: Peace in the Church

Aug. 4: Seeking True Peace in God and Not in Attachments

For directions to Mt. Irenaeus, go to www.mounti.com or call 716-375-2096.

Mt. Irenaeus, established by friars from St. Bonaventure University, just celebrated its 25th anniversary at its hilltop location near West Clarkesville.

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Newsmakers

Dr. Ed. Simone, chair of the Department of Visual and Performing Arts and director of the Theater Program, has been elected to the Liaison Committee for the Buffalo/Rochester Region of Actors' Equity Association. The Liaison Committee works with Equity's national office in New York to help create performance opportunities for the area's professional actors and stage managers, promote regional awareness of Equity's work and history, and make recommendations regarding contracts and relationships with regional theater producers.

A number of St. Bonaventure University programs were represented at the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities 2010 AFCU Symposium, June 8-11, 2010, at The University of St. Francis in Ft. Wayne, Ind. The theme of the symposium was "Educating for the Care of Creation: Contemporary Verses for the Cantic of the Creatures."

There was representation from many of the other 22 Franciscan universities and colleges in the United States. Programs across academic disciplines, campus life and administration were present at the three-day symposium.

St. Bonaventure University was represented from the School of Business by John Stevens, Kathy Premo and Joe Coate; School of Education by Paula Scraba; Franciscan Center for Social Concern by Sr. Suzanne Kush; and the Perugia Center program by Mike Chiariello. They were also joined by the new dean of the School of Arts and Sciences Wolfgang Natter and the president of Hilbert College, Cynthia Zane.

The following programs made presentations at the AFCU Symposium: Michael Chiarello - Franciscan Heritage Program-(Perugia)

Joe Coate, Kathy Premo and John Stevens - Creating Franciscan Based Educational Experience in the St Bonaventure School of Business: the Genesis of Two Best Practices

Paula J. Scraba and Todd Palmer - Globalization - Franciscan Perspectives: Preaching a New View for Care of Creation through International Service Learning.

Paula J. Scraba - Build with Living Stones- Meditative Reflections: The Images for the Integrity of Creation- A Franciscan View of the Environment: Brother Sun and Sister Moon vs. The Economy and Global Reality.

The next gathering of the 22 Franciscan colleges and universities will be the 2012 AFCU Symposium June 12-15, 2012, at Viterbo University, LaCrosse, Wis., with the theme of Franciscan Leadership. All campus programs are welcomed to submit proposals for the 2012 AFCU Symposiums.

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