

Book events

Barnes and Noble Twenty Ninth Street

PA Ritzer ("Seven Ox Seven"), 10 a.m. Saturday. 2999 Pearl St., Boulder, 303-444-0349.

Boulder Book Store

Thomas Powers ("The Killing of Crazy Horse"), 7:30 p.m. Monday; Chandra Hoffman ("Chosen"), 7:30 p.m. Wednesday; Fen Montaigne ("Fraser's Penguins"), 7:30 p.m. Thursday. 1107 Pearl St., Boulder, 303-447-1252.

Tattered Cover Colfax Avenue

Ingrid Law ("Scumble") 7:30 p.m. Tuesday. Elizabeth Street and Colfax Avenue, Denver; 303-436-1070.

Tattered Cover LoDo

Christopher Brown ("Path of Beauty: Photographic Adventures in the Grand Canyon"), 7:30 p.m. Monday; Thomas Powers ("The Killing of Crazy Horse"), 7:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Rushdie hurls plot twists in 'Luka'

Book might be better as a spoken story

By Craig Seligman
Bloomberg News

Salman Rushdie has said that seeing "The Wizard of Oz" made a writer of him. In "Luka and the Fire of Life," his new children's book, "The Wizard of Oz" meets "The Faerie Queen."

Rushdie grabs everything from everywhere — cult movies, epic poems, computer games; Apollonius of Rhodes and Shakespeare, Johnny Cash and George Harrison; fantasy, allegory, homily and nonsense. The plot is a race against time: Twelve-year-old Luka braves the World of Magic on a quest for the titular Fire of Life, which he needs to revive his dying father, the storyteller Rashid Khalifa.

Like Rushdie's 1990 "Haroun and the Sea of Stories," to which it forms a pendant, "Luka and the Fire of Life" (Random House, \$25) began as a tale for one of the author's own sons. It has a seat-of-the-pants inventiveness that suggests a clever dad spinning out "bedtime stories and breakfast sagas and dinner-table yarns."

That notion is very Rushdie. The narrator of "Midnight's Children," his much-acclaimed 1981 novel, more than once compares himself to Scheherazade.

Like Scheherazade, this dad rattles on with a hint of desperation, as though the kid might blow up if he were to stop. Plot twists hurtle at you thick as hailstones. Every paragraph rockets off in a new direction. And as you feel yourself wearing down, you may start to suspect that Rushdie is writing for a specific group of children: the ones with attention deficit disorder.

This kind of writing may indeed captivate tykes who are more at home playing iPhone games than reading. My own eyes glazed over as the author labored to cram every supernatural being from every mythology he could Google into his brief book:

"And fat Fa'atiu the Samoan is over there, and bulgy Buluga of the Andaman Islands is over there, and Ara Tiotio the Tornado God of Polynesia, and Paka'a from Hawaii. And Ays the Armenian Wind Demon, and the Vila, the Slav Goddesses, and the Norse winged giant Hraesvelg..."

To his credit, he recognizes his tendency to pile it on, or at least he recognizes that others recognize it — "Stop, please stop," Luka begged. "It doesn't matter what they're called." My guess is that the gentle jibes at the loquacity of Luka's storytelling father (when he falls ill the headline is "No More Blather From the Shah of Blah") originated in the Rushdie household.

Will kids who cut their teeth on Harry Potter find anything here to absorb them? Since Rushdie is a parent and I'm not, I can only wonder if he's on to something. But it would take more magic than he can conjure to extend the spell to grown-ups.

NONPROFIT

Spotlighting community connections, programming and benefits.

Attention Homes

Our mission: Our mission is to provide residential treatment, counseling and safe shelter to at-risk youth. Our goal is to help teens in crisis become healthy, productive members of our community.

We serve: Attention Homes serves abused, neglected, runaway, homeless, troubled, delinquent and recovering boys and girls, ages 12-18. In an average year more than 100 teens live in our homes.

Brief history: Attention Homes was founded in 1966 by Judge Horace Holmes, probation officer John Hargadine, a First United Methodist Church bible study, and concerned community members who saw the need to provide "Attention, not Detention" to troubled youth. They believed there needed to be an alternative to institutionalization or detention so that children would have a safety net and a chance to thrive rather than being placed in a locked facility or with others requiring more intensive services. Attention Homes was one of the first nonprofits of its kind in the United States.

The innovation of the program drew groups from more than 25 localities to travel to Boulder to visit the homes. In fact, more than 200 homes were started across the U.S. and internationally based on the Attention Homes model. We focus on problems caused by abuse, neglect, violence, homelessness, runaway behaviors, substance use, family dysfunction, mental health illness, educational deficiencies, delinquent behaviors and related issues which have imposed negative effects on children, families and our community.

Proudest accomplishment: In the past 44 years, Attention Homes has served 6,000 boys and girls with life-changing residential services. As the needs of kids change, so do our services. Attention Homes' board of directors recently approved a business plan to increase services to runaway and homeless youth living on



Courtesy photo

Attention Homes helps at-risk youth by providing a stable environment in trying times.

the streets of Boulder County. Studies estimate there are as many as 200 kids living on our streets at any given time. Our new Runaway & Homeless Youth (RHY) program was created with the goal to provide teens a continuum of care that leads them off the streets and to long term housing and/or family reunification. Attention Homes provides the only emergency shelter option for boys and girls in Boulder County.

Greatest need: Attention Homes is in need of additional support for our Runaway & Homeless Youth (RHY) program. We are seeking individuals to assist with our street outreach and day drop-in services by serving and packaging meals, working with the teens and assisting our street team with delivering goods to kids. We are also seeking corporate, faith, civic and school groups to host donation drives to collect goods, including food, clothing, ponchos, blankets and hygiene supplies. If you can help, please contact us at 303-447-1206 or contactAH@attentionhomes.org.

Benefits

THIS WEEK

StrEAT Chefs World AIDS Day StrEAT Chefs will serve gourmet offerings (with a portion of the proceeds benefiting the Boulder County AIDS Project for World AIDS Day, 5:30-8 p.m. Wednesday. Look for the StrEAT Chefs food truck at the First United Methodist Church parking lot, 1421 Spruce St., Boulder. Details: 303-444-6121.

Friends of Longmont Youth Art Exhibition & Auction Art auction benefiting FLY (Friends of Longmont Youth). Sneak preview of the art available for auction starting Thursday, through Dec. 10. The art includes work from local youth as well as art donated by professional artists. Art will be auctioned off 6-9 p.m. Dec. 10, Muse Gallery, 356 Main St., Longmont. Details: 303-678-7869.

Blues Concert For Fourmile Fire Relief Featuring three local blues bands: Felonus Smith Trio, Papa Juke and Teresa Lynne Band, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Friday, Gold Hill Inn, 401 Main St., Gold Hill, \$10 suggested donation. All proceeds go to the Boulder Mountain Fire Relief Fund. Details: 303-443-6461 or www.goldhillinn.com/welcome.html.

Grove Foundation holiday party Music, dancing, silent auction and food by Chef Hugo Matheson of The Kitchen. All ticket proceeds will benefit the Grove Foundation, a garden program in Boulder Valley School District, 7-11 p.m. Friday, Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, \$75-\$100. RSVP at www.regonline.com/helpusgrove.

6th Annual Longmont Historic Home Tour Art & Gift Sale See the work of local artists in five area homes: 1126 Third Ave., 1014 Fifth Ave., 535 Gay St., 535 Bowen St., and 411 Grant St., all in Longmont, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Proceeds from the event benefit Alternatives for Youth. Details: 303-587-0528.

45th Annual Christmas Home

Spotlighting community connections, programming and benefits.

VOLUNTEER OF THE WEEK



Laura Skaggs
Emergency Family Assistance Association Community Table

"The clients at EFAA have so much courage and dignity. I learn lessons in resilience every week and feel grateful for that opportunity."

Volunteer here

Volunteer Connection is Boulder County's primary source for volunteerism. Following is a sample of current opportunities with member agencies. Visit www.volunteerconnection.net to search for more opportunities with these and other agencies, or call 303-444-4904 to arrange for an appointment with one of our referral counselors.

Volunteer Loan Originators: Assist qualifying families with obtaining home rehab loans through a Boulder County Housing Authority program. Give your time and expertise to allow a family to update and preserve their older home. Loan originators are required at all times to be in compliance with HB10-1141 and the SAFE Act. Boulder County Housing Authority. Jim Wilson. 720-564-2646.

Attendant Counselor: Assist Intensive Services (Detox) staff in delivery of services to substance abuse clients, including admissions/discharges, monitoring vital signs, assessments, some counseling. Number of volunteers needed varies throughout the year. njohnson@bouldercounty.org for more information and an application.

Proofreader: Detail-oriented person needed to proofread curriculum books. Word processing skills a must; flexible weekday hours. Center for Safe Schools. Amie Crouch. 303-828-9733. centerforsafeschools@comcast.net.

Toy Shop Operation: Assist parents as they select toys on Saturday, Dec. 18. Adults/older teens needed for check in/out and toy selection. Spanish is helpful. Sign up in advance. Primary shifts are 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1-5 p.m. Location: TBD (check website at www.shareagift.org) Share-A-Gift. Jo Ann Joseph. 303-494-4258. Joann.joseph@shareagift.org.

Kindness for Kids: Holiday gift program for families in need of assistance in the Longmont area. 2-3 hour shifts to assist with toy sorting, loading, or greeting clients on Distribution Day. Opportunities available Dec. 13-18. Bi-lingual speakers encouraged; also groups and families. Schedule and registration online: www.kindness-for-kids.org. Michele Stephens. 303-204-9734.

Holiday Basket Preparation: Help EFAA get ready for their holiday food basket program. Spruce up bags with holiday ribbons, bag produce and general organization of the food pantry. M-F week of December 6. Emergency Family Assistance. Sharon Atwood. 303-951-7663. shalon@efaa.org.

Ice Busters: Shovel snow for seniors and people with disabilities. Flexible schedule; locations in city of Boulder. CareConnect. Richard Varnes. 303-443-1933. richardvarnes@careconnectbc.org.

Paperwork Organizer: Help seniors in their homes to organize paperwork and transfer documents to computer if needed. Flexible schedule between senior and volunteer. City of Boulder Senior Services. Jacki Myers. 303-441-4388. myersj@boulder-colorado.gov.

One-on-one Dog Visitor: Visit residents in skilled nursing facility and use your friendly, well-trained dog to provide a sensory opportunity for engagement with an animal and conversation with the visitor. Mornings or afternoons; background check required. Frasier Meadows. Catherine Jacks. 720-562-4442. cjacks@frasiermeadows.org.

and injured wildlife. Details: 866-235-8255 or www.buffaloexchange.com.

The EFAA Food Bank. Emergency Family Assistance Association is in short supply of the following items for the food bank: tuna, cereal, chili, and size 4 diapers; west side of building, 1575 Yarmouth Ave., Boulder. Details: 303-951-7667 or www.efaa.org.

Boulder Bucks. Purchase vouchers through the Carriage House, which can be given to members of the homeless community and redeemed at numerous local restaurants, shops, grocery stores, laundry facilities, recreation centers and RTD. The vouchers cannot be redeemed for tobacco or alcohol. Details: www.bouldercarriagehouse.org/services/boulder-change or 303-442-8300.

Colorado Greyhound Adoption. Meet and greet available greyhounds for adoption on the fourth Saturday of every month between noon and 2 p.m. at Petco, 2480 Arapahoe Ave., Boulder. Details: 303-544-1333.

Volunteers for Senior Wellness Clinics. The Visiting Nurse Association, a nonprofit provider of home care, hospice and wellness services throughout Colorado, is looking for individuals interested in becoming a volunteer to assist clinic nurses by serving as a receptionist, assisting with client paperwork and scheduling appointments. Clinics are located at churches, community and senior centers, and senior residential facilities. Clinics are usually held once a month on weekdays for four to six hours and volunteers are assigned to clinics that are convenient for them. For additional information contact Nora Simmons Daly, volunteer resources manager, 303-698-6387 or email VNAvolunteers@vnaolorado.org.

To submit items for this column, please post online at <http://calendar.dailycamera.com>; by e-mail to community@dailycamera.com; or by mail to Benefits, 1048 Pearl St., Boulder, CO 80302.