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‘Uplifting and positive message’ in Sarasota’s One Book, One Community selection

Emily Leinfuss Special to the Herald-Tribune

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Although it was first published in 2009, the ideas imparted in “The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope” are increasingly relevant today. That’s one reason why it was selected as the 2022 book for Sarasota County Library’s [One Book, One Community](#) program.

The book for the annual program is selected by a committee, based on criteria like timely settings or subjects and broad general interest for many ages.

With themes like persevering through adversity, the power of one person to change lives, and the importance of alternative energy sources, “The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind” checked all the boxes.

This year was different, however, because there was a new-for-2022 criterion.

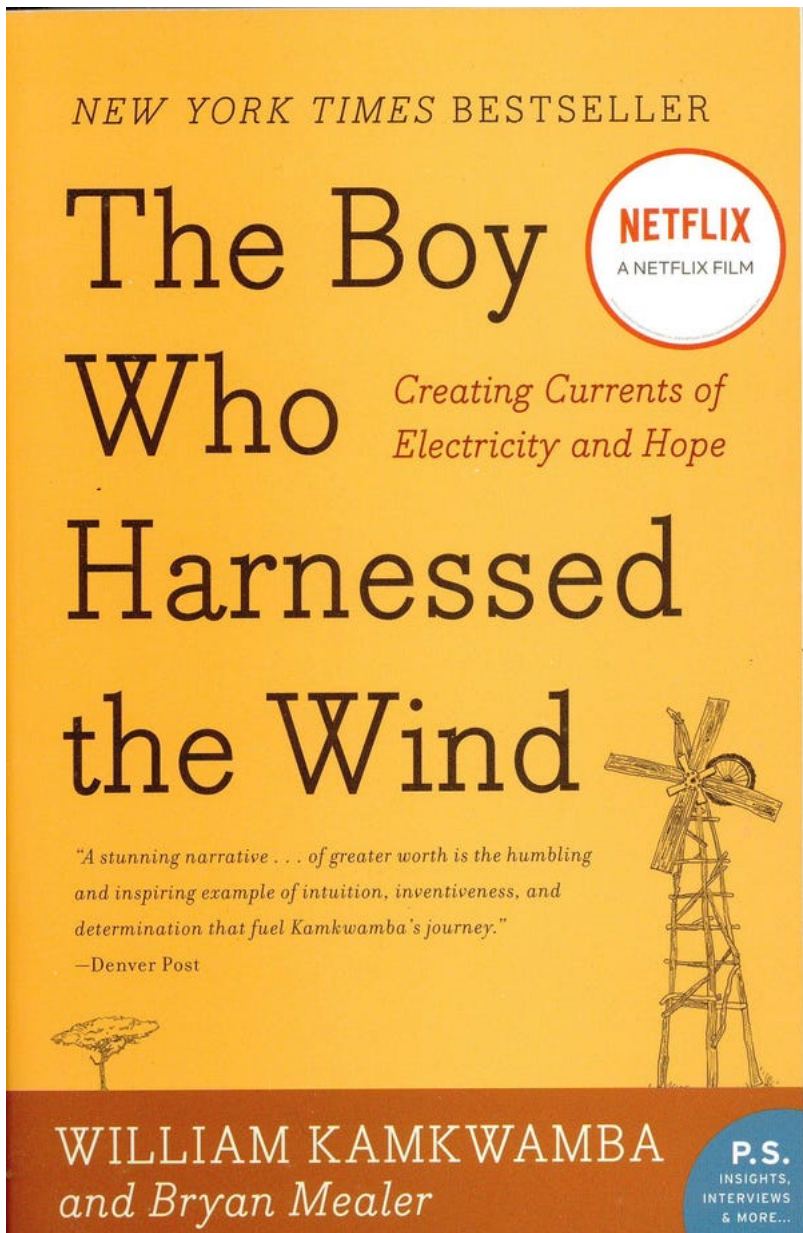
“The selection committee had all agreed that we wanted the book to have an uplifting and positive message,” said Ellen India, adult service coordinator at Sarasota County Libraries and Historical Resources. “We knew that with the pandemic, it would be an especially stressful time.”

The bestselling autobiography shows author William Kamkwamba’s journey when, at age 14, he cobbled together an electricity-generating windmill from scrap metal, tractor parts and bicycle pieces, using rough plans he found in library books. Eventually, the windmill brought electricity and running water to his small village in the African country of Malawi.

“This is the 19th year the Sarasota County library system has participated in the ‘One Book, One Community’ program, which started in 1996 in Seattle to help foster the expression of ideas within the community through the shared love of reading,” said Renee Di Pilato, director of Sarasota County Libraries and Historical Resources. “This program encourages discussion across the county, and this book perfectly illustrates the power of one person’s ability to change their community for the better.”



William Kamkwamba, author of “The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind” Courtesy Photo



“The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind” by William Kamkwamba was chosen for the 2022 Sarasota One Book, One Community program. Courtesy Photo

The book also met one more crucial criterion. The author must be able to come to Sarasota for readings and events: a signature highlight of One Book One Community programming. This year, for the first time, it will feature both live and virtual events on Thursday and Friday, Feb. 17 and 18.

“I hope that people take from my journey the (idea that) we don’t change the world always through huge actions, sometimes it starts by identifying the issue in your backyard, thinking deeply on what can be done to solve it, and taking determined action,” said author William Kamkwamba.

Kamkwamba will talk about the 2008 launch of the nonprofit Moving Windmills ([movingwindmills.org](#)) and his current quest to build an innovation center in Malawi, so that “young people can find the tools and mentors to create solutions to everyday challenges.”

Considering the importance of libraries in his own journey, that might be another topic he’ll discuss.

“Libraries connect us across time, cultures, communities, and languages. Books allow us to see how much we have in common beyond the surface. A good book allows you to travel the world without going anywhere,” he said.

This year, all of Sarasota’s One Book One Community programming is going to be “truly intergenerational,” noted India. For the first time in the program’s 19-year history in Sarasota, there are three versions of one book: a picture book for kids, a young adult version and an adult version.

With the same story presented in different formats for readers of all ages, the libraries had a wider range of options for creating both fun and instructional ancillary programming for all ages, in areas that include sustainability, STEM learning, the arts and more.

The children’s book version of “The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind.” Courtesy Photo

Events continue throughout the coming months and include African Dance and Storytelling (4-5 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 15, at the North Sarasota Library), an Asolo Play Readers’ adaptation from the book (2-3 p.m. Feb. 22 at Fruitville Public Library) and Orisirisi African Folklore (3-4 p.m. March 11 at the William H. Jervy Jr. Venice Library).

Given Kamkwamba’s message of love and connection, the experience is bound to be downright magical.

“We are more alike than we are different. We may not talk the same, look the same, eat the same, or come from the same place – but I was motivated by love for my family, and I think that is the case for many people,” he said.

One Book, One Community Author Events

Seating is first-come, first-seated. Both events will also be livestreamed. Find more details at [scgov.net/onebook](#).

- 2 p.m., Feb. 17 at Suncoast Technical College Conference Center, 4445 Career Lane, North Port
- 7 p.m., Feb. 18 at Selby Public Library, 1331 First St., Sarasota

Learn more about the Sarasota County Library’s One Book One Community program and programming specifics at [scgov.net/government/libraries/one-book-sarasota](#).

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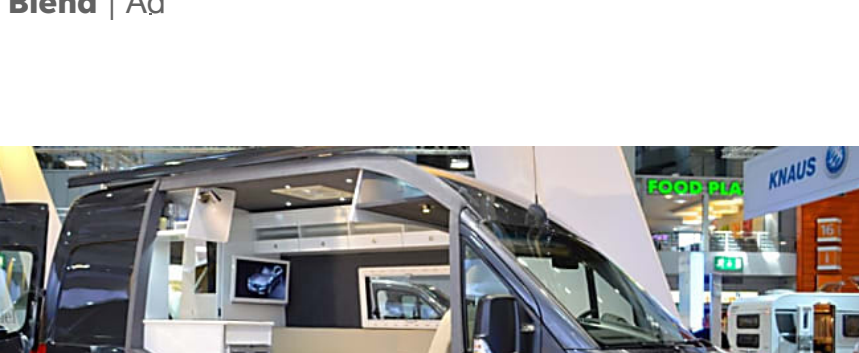
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