FICTION:

100 Days of Happiness by Fausto Brizzi: Lucio Battistini made a mistake—a big one. He cheated on his wife and is relegated to sleeping in the back room of his father-in-law’s bomboloni (donut) bakery. Not long after, he learns he has terminal cancer. He decides that he will live the time left to him—100 days—to the hilt, and in the process hopes to win the forgiveness of his wife Paola, who is truly the love of his life. Wistful, touching, and often hilarious, this book reminds us to remember how precious life is and what matters most. Beth’s Pick

At the Edge of the Orchard by Tracy Chevalier: A rough-hewn family struggles to survive in Ohio’s Black Swamp by attempting to grow apple trees. John Chapman/Johnny Appleseed makes a few appearances revealing an unexpected personality. The second half of the book reaches west, as one member of the family seeks escape and finds more trees, discovering giant Redwoods and Sequoias. Davonne’s pick

Bone Gap by Laura Ruby: I decided to read Bone Gap for the Library Book Bash Reading Challenge because it won the 2016 Printz Award for the "best book written for teens" and was also a 2015 National Book Award Finalist for Young People’s Literature. This book is very cleverly written. Finn lives in a town where people appear and disappear at random. No one seems concerned when Finn’s friend Roza goes missing, but Finn saw a man take her. Finn’s journey to find this man leads him to explore his world and beyond. Laura’s pick

Eleven Hours by Pamela Erens: A lovely, brief, evocative novel that captures the intensity of childbirth. The author illuminates her main character, Lore’s, experience, revealing the complexity of relationships that brought her to this place and time of her child’s birth. All the details are skillfully woven into her eleven hours of labor. Judith’s pick

Even in Darkness by Barbara Stark-Nemon: This is a compelling piece of fiction based on the story of the author’s great-aunt, Klare, who survived the Holocaust, and then returned to live in Germany. Stark-Nemon, who grew up in the Detroit area, and has spent her adult life between Ann Arbor and Northport, proves to be a skillful storyteller. What carries the book is Klare’s understated, beautiful, but determined handling of her horrific experience. Even though the writing style may seem flowery to some, I found the story spell-binding and Klare an amazing character. Judith’s pick

Lilac Girls by Martha Hall Kelly: Set in World War II, Lilac Girls follows the lives of three women—a Polish resistance fighter who ends up in the Ravensbruck concentration camp, a New York socialite who gives her all to help war orphans and children in France, and a German doctor who spends much of the war performing terrible atrocities in Ravensbruck. Each has her own story which eventually intertwines with the others. Two were real people while the other was based on a real person. The author does an excellent job blending their lives together and creating an engaging story about three women trying to survive in a world ripped apart by war. Talia’s pick

Mort(e) by Robert Repino: “Think Animal Farm as re-imagined by Orson Scott Card” and you might get an idea of how this novel is going to play out. Sebastian is a neutered and declassed housecat who befriends a dog named Sheba. Into their world comes an army of giant ants, led by an omniscient queen intent on destroying humanity. Science fiction, allegory, war story, morality tale: after reading this book I will never look at my pet the same way again! Beth’s pick

The Passenger by Lisa Lutz: A roller coaster ride of psychological intrigue; the only price of admission is a good alias. The story boasts resilient female characters whose motives and troubles you desperately try to understand, but just can’t grasp until all is revealed in an expected ending. A fun quick read. Janice’s pick

The Stockholm Octavo by Karen Englemann: Set in Sweden in the final years of the rule of King Gustav III (1771-92), this is the story of Emil Larsson, who “came from nothing” and now works for the customs office and is under pressure from his superior to marry. Offered advice by the keeper of a select gaming room, he is introduced to the Octavo, a set of eight cards from a mysterious deck representing eight characters he will meet who will help him find the fiancée and advancement he seeks. Filled with an array of interesting characters, this historical novel/adventure story is great fun. Beth’s pick
NON-FICTION:

_H is for Hawk_ by Helen MacDonald: When MacDonald’s father died suddenly, she was devastated. An experienced falconer, she’d never before been tempted to train one of the most vicious predators, the goshawk. But in her grief, she saw that the goshawk’s fierce and wild temperament mirrored her own and so “adopted” Mabel, and turned to T.H. White’s (author of _The Once and Future King_) chronicle ‘The Goshawk’ to begin the endeavor of training Mabel. This book is three stories: Helen’s struggle to overcome the paralysis of grief, a description of the craft of falconry, and her analysis of the tormented psyche of T. H. White. The audio version is beautifully read by the author. _Beth’s pick_

_More Than Happy: The Wisdom of Amish Parenting_ by Serena Miller and Paul Stutzman:  _More Than Happy_ is written for any parent interested in exploring how other parents raise their children. It is nice to see an approach to parenthood where children are nurtured to develop wholesome qualities such as respect, helpfulness, patience and more. Miller offers advice from her Amish friends on some of the simple things they do to develop happy children. _Laura’s pick_

_Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges_ by Amy Cuddy: A fascinating study about how people can access inner strength, personal power, and presence to bring confidence and satisfaction in their lives. The scientific studies and individual stories are entertaining and enlightening. Amy Cuddy is well-known for her TED Talk about “power poses.” _Davonne’s pick_

_The Rainbow Comes and Goes_ by Anderson Cooper and Gloria Vanderbilt:  Son and mother share a year long conversation they had during Vanderbilt’s 91st year. They discuss all the topics, thoughts, and feelings of their lives. This intimate portrait of a family is compelling and thoughtful. Both mother and son are famous in their own right and bring experiences and people to life in their writings. As I read the book, I thought about having the same kind of conversation with my own parents. _Linda’s pick_

_Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age_ by Sherry Turkle:  Renowned media scholar Sherry Turkle investigates how a flight from conversation undermines our relationships, creativity, and productivity—and why reclaiming face-to-face conversation can help us regain lost ground. We live in a technological universe in which we are always communicating. And yet we have sacrificed conversation for mere connections online. This book brings out many points about the power of face to face conversation and how it creates empathy and connections with others. _Linda’s pick_

_Rosemary: The Hidden Kennedy Daughter_ by Kate Clifford Larson: A sad and heart rending biography of Rosemary Kennedy, depicting the struggles of a famous family to cope with their disabled daughter, who make tragic and irrevocable decisions along the way. Consequently, the Kennedys recognized the need for study and resources in the area of the mentally disabled and established funds in this field, including Eunice Kennedy Shriver’s founding of the Special Olympics. _Davonne’s pick_

_The Secret Life of the American Musical: How Broadway Shows Are Built_ by Jack Viertel: As senior vice president of Jujamcyn Theaters, Viertel is perfectly suited for this subject. If you have any experience in musical theatre, you will delight in the wealth of detail about the history of how the shows were conceived and structured. Viertel is current, discussing how the smash hit _Hamilton_ evolved from the 20th century genre. The writing is fluid and engaging, with detail that might slow the pace were it not so wonderfully woven in with contemporary issues. If you don’t know much about musicals, this will enlighten, and perhaps motivate you to take in a show somewhere, whether locally, or as part of a special trip to one of the great urban centers. _Judith’s pick_

_Under Another Sky: Journeys in Roman Britain_ by Charlotte Higgins: The juxtaposition between modern time and history has always been interesting to me and Charlotte Higgins does an excellent job in this book of comparing the current cities and areas of Britain to the Roman remains. She describes how the Roman towns were laid out in relation to the modern buildings with maps and drawings included. She also describes how the towns would have been populated and worked during that time. If you have an interest in Roman occupied Britain, this would be an excellent book to read. _Talia’s pick_

_Valiant Ambition: George Washington, Benedict Arnold, and the Fate of the American Revolution_ by Nathaniel Philbrick: Benedict Arnold is quite an infamous character in American history but few ever learn of his true motivations and how the treachery played out. Nathaniel Philbrick describes Arnold’s early successes with the Continental Army alongside the dysfunction of the Continental Congress that led to many grievance’s, including Arnold’s eventual downward spiral that lead to his traitorous actions. The back story is fascinating and this is great book if you are interested in the American Revolution. _Talia’s pick_