

LocalNews

Local authors write a different history

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The history of the United States, from roughly the 1500s through the middle of the 20th century, has been written almost exclusively by men. In turn, many women's accomplishments were ignored or simply forgotten.

For two local authors, the goal was to shed light on hundreds of American women, from all walks of life, who have broken barriers and created paths of noteworthy, inspiring achievement.

"Her Story: A Timeline of Women Who Changed America" is a documentation of the breadth and diversity of American women's achievements throughout U.S. history. It highlights and illustrates the varied contributions of writers, actors, artists and athletes to doctors, scientists, social and political activists, educators and inventors.

"We enjoy the rights and freedoms we do today because of these earlier women and their courageous actions," the authors said. "Today's women can do it all because of all the women who came before and on whose shoulders we stand."

The authors will sign copies at Borders in Park Meadows mall at 2 p.m. Sept. 13.

Charlotte Waisman was teaching a women's leadership class when she mentioned Margaret Singer, the first woman to have been nominated for a Nobel Prize for her work in schizophrenia.

Waisman was greeted by a class of blank stares. They'd never heard of Margaret Singer.

"As a professor, I wanted to find a book to give to my students for more informa-

tion on influential women in history," Waisman said. "There were books about great African-American women, books about ballet dancers, the top-100 female journalists, but no one had made a timeline compiling all of these women's accomplishments."

That all changed when the two authors joined forces.

Jill Tietjen, an electrical engineer, had been doing her own research and had been making note of influential women in science and technology fields for years. Her list exceeded 200 names by the time she met Waisman.

Though the selection process was painstaking, Tietjen and Waisman say picking the women to include in "Her Story" was the most rewarding part.

To become part of the story, each influential American woman was assessed based on the following criteria: they had to be the first woman to do something out of the ordinary; they had to provide some sort of ah-ha moment in history; they changed America.

The authors started without any specific women in mind, but were amazed by the amount of names they discovered along the way.

"Charlotte wanted to include Isadora Dunkin, the mother of modern dance. I had no idea who she was," Tietjen, said. "And I wanted to include people [Waisman] hadn't heard of."

"We just kept discovering new ones as we went along," Waisman said.

"Our original lists had thousands of names because people who knew we were doing this would come to us and tell us about people we'd never heard of."

Tietjen and Waisman said they have about 300 names already compiled if a second



"Her Story: A Timeline of Women Who Changed America" is a documentation of women's achievements throughout U.S. history. Courtesy Photo

edition is written.

Once the nearly 900 women were chosen, the authors set out to illustrate their text, gathering pictures from the U.S. Library of Congress, various museums and family members. The book's layout and design exceeded both author's expectations with sepia-colored pages and thousands of authentic photos.

"We had seen the designer's work in other books, but we had no idea this would turn out so well," Waisman said.

For more information on the book, visit www.herstory-atimeline.com.



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