

Great Falls Forum

Thursday, March 15

Local author Suzanne Johnson will be the Great Falls Forum's featured speaker this Thursday at the Lewiston Public Library's Marsden Hartley Cultural Center from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Johnson is the author of "Til Death Do Us Part," a recently published book about Alzheimer's Disease and the struggles she and her parents faced coping with the disease. The Forum is a "bring-your-own" lunch program and free to the public. No reservations are necessary.

Joining Johnson at the podium will be John Mauro of Auburn, a local Alzheimer's activist. Johnson and Mauro are filling in for best-selling author Tess Gerritsen who had to cancel because of a death in the family. We hope to present Gerritsen in a Forum program next fall.

'Til Death Do Us Part' tells of the struggles of devoted husband Raymond Legendre (Suzanne Johnson's father) with his wife Beatrice's 15 years of living with Alzheimer's. It is a story of respect, endurance and love. While the story is sometimes sad, Johnson says she attempted to also capture the caring, tender relationship between her parents and also the lighter sides of her mother's disease. The book started as a journal and was offered to help family members cope as they grieved. It is Johnson's first book.

Appearing with Johnson will be John Mauro of Auburn, whose wife Deborah died Feb. 15 after an eight-year battle with Alzheimer's. Deborah Mauro was a former physical education teacher, marathon runner, downhill skier and bicyclist. Her husband John is an advocate, traveling to Washington D.C. and elsewhere, meeting with state representatives to try and get \$1 billion to research and find a cure for what he calls an 'epidemic' in today's world, one which, he warns, will bankrupt Medicaid and Medicare. Mauro notes that Alzheimer's doesn't affect the elderly exclusively. His wife was diagnosed at 49 and he knows of another person diagnosed in her early 30s, as well as many others.

The forum is a monthly public platform for thought-provoking speakers and discussion. It is sponsored by the Sun Journal, Lewiston Public Library, St. Mary's Regional Medical Center and Bates College. Everyone is welcome. Reservations are not necessary for this event. Bring your own lunch. Water and desert will be provided a small cost.

A question-and-answer period follows each talk. Books will be available for purchase and will be signed by the author following this event.

This season's remaining speakers are on April 19, USM Professor Mike Brady, on "Baseball and American Society," and on May 17, LHS Guidance Counselor Joan Macri on "Creating a College-Going Culture."