

As kids, Raya Samet and Barbara Kriigel read the popular *Little Golden Books* series, following the adventures of Saggy Baggy Elephant, the Poky Little Puppet, Shy Little Kitten and Scuffy the Tugboat. Their copies of the beloved books may be long gone, but now they get to relive their childhood with the University of Michigan-Dearborn's latest exhibition, [Golden Legacy: Original Art from 75 Years of Golden Books](#), currently on view at the Alfred Berkowitz Gallery through December 17th.



The Lions Paw

“The artwork is so much more vibrant in person than it is in the books,” said Kriigel, Associate Director, User & Technical Services, at the University’s Mardigian Library of the series that was originally published in 1942. “It’s really beautiful.”

The exhibition—part of this year’s Young Authors’ Festival, which is organized by Kriigel, Samet, and education professor, Danielle DeFauw—has pieces from the library’s collection, as well as 65 pieces of original artwork, and a few books from the National Center for Children’s Illustrated Literature’s traveling exhibition of the same name.

The library booked the traveling exhibit two years ago, which happily coincided with the 75th anniversary of *Little Golden Books*. The library also received a Michigan Humanities Council grant, which is allowing the gallery to have extended hours during its run.

So what should guests expect at the exhibition? Variety.

“There’s all the Disney collaborations, all the classic television tie-ins, and the original characters people love from the *Little Golden Books*,” said Samet, the Mardigian Library’s Education, Health & Human Services Librarian. “Then there’s some weird ones, where you’re like, seriously? They made this book? Those are kind of fun, too.” Illustrators for *Little Golden Books* feature greats like Richard Scarry, Corinne Malvern and Gustaf Tenggren, as the books became household names after 1.5 million books were sold in the first five months of printing in 1942.

The exhibition also features two events. The first, on November 3rd, featured Diane Muldrow, editor of the *Little Golden Books* and author of the *Everything I Need to Know I Learned from a Little Golden Book* series, and the Little Golden Books Family Afternoon on November 18th.

The family afternoon event seemed like the perfect opportunity to expand the age range the library reaches with their Young Authors’ Festival, which focuses on students in grades 3-5, and promotes literacy for children and their families. This event—primarily funded by a grant from the Detroit Metro Book and Author Society—will focus on children in kindergarden through second grade, and include arts and crafts, light refreshments, and readings of *Little Golden Books*. There’s also going to be a reading therapy dog and Paws from the Detroit Tigers.

Samet and Kriigel hope an event like that will encourage people to read and share books in a variety of ways, and introduce more people to *Little Golden Books*. It will also be



Baby Animals

an opportunity for guests to consider the artwork and how that plays a part in the literacy experience of sharing books with children. Primarily, they want an event like this to encourage literacy among younger children.

“We really do think this will make a big difference,” Samet said. “A lot of people tell us their stories about *Little Golden Books* from when they were kids. We have a lot of that going on too...understanding the roles that reading with your family, or by yourself, has on your life and impacts you growing up.”

And it has a big one, especially for those who have participated in their annual Young Authors’ Festival, which

began in 2013 and takes place November 11th. Samet said they have kids who come back year after year, even a few who have moved away and still come back. They get teachers who have their classes participate, homeschool groups, and book clubs. The day-long event includes a writing contest, special guest speakers, and children can participate in two breakout sessions.

“There are not that many opportunities for children in this age group to attend festivals like this,” Samet said. “We think it’s a little bit unique, and we are very proud to be able to bring together such a diverse community of writers.”

One of the questions they do get though is if they are going to expand to kids in other grades, both younger and older than the third through fifth grade range. When asked if they see themselves expanding after this year’s event, both are hopeful they will. It really comes down to finding funding and finding the time.

For now though, Kriigel and Samet will focus on getting through an art exhibition, a reception, a family afternoon, and the actual festival.

“We’re just looking forward to a lot of excited kids and a lot of sharing of these books,” Samet said.



The Great Big Fire Engine Book

All images courtesy of Random House.

For more information about *Golden Legacy: Original Art from 75 Years of Golden Books*, on view at the Alfred Berkowitz Gallery through December 17th, click [here](#). To register for the Young Authors’ Festival on November 11th, click [here](#).

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