



Young adult fiction authors Leigh Statham, left, Tiffany D. Jackson and Beth Revis take a selfie at the Third Annual Teen Literature Festival by the Durham County Library held at Charles E. Jordan High School on Feb. 17. Statham promoted her book, while Jackson and Revis gave short lectures to the audience about empathy and inspiration in literature, respectively.

Third Annual Teen Literature Festival helps ‘foster love of reading’ at local high school

By Maria Elena Vizcaino
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One of Beth Revis’ books was canceled. Another one didn’t sell well. Another one was pushed back. Her agent rejected two others.

“Everybody always assumes if you write a book it’ll be published,” Revis told the audience at the Third Annual Teen Literature Festival. “The first painting an artist paints won’t be hanging from the walls of the Met.”

Revis is a New York Times’ best-seller of young adult fiction who spoke at the festival hosted by the Durham County Library. The event took place at Jordan High School in Durham on the Feb. 17. Dozens of Durham residents took notes and listened carefully to Revis’ advice about inspiration for characters and plots.

“Be curious and learn something new and meet new people,” Revis said. “That’s how you’ll find your story.”

Jordan High School student Sonia Green attended the festival because she read “Allegedly” by Tiffany D. Jackson in 48 hours. Jackson is another renowned author of the young adult fiction who presented at the event. She talked about the the importance of empathy—the ability to understand and share someone else’s feelings—in literature.

“I love reading. Sometimes I read when I’m supposed to be doing my homework,”

Sonia Green

Green said she looks up to authors because, in addition to being an avid reader, she wants to write dystopian novels in the future.

“I love reading,” she said. “Sometimes I read when I’m supposed to be doing my homework.”

Although Green is only 14 years old, she staples pages of her writing together to resemble a book.

“As she’s getting older and she’s exploring career paths, she’s taken an interest in reading and writing. So coming to events like these is good for her,” said Green’s mother, Wilhelmina Green.

The audience—made up of children and adults alike—took notes and asked the authors questions after their presentations.

The festival ran from 12:30 to about 3:30 p.m. Originally, three young adult authors were supposed to present to the audience, but J.J. (Jennifer) Johnson, author of the book “Belie-

varexic,” canceled because she had the flu.

After the presentations, some attendees enjoyed cupcakes and soft drinks, while others walked around tables with books for sale, including “Across the Universe” by Revis and “Allegedly” by Jackson. The authors cheerfully signed books and took pictures with their fans.

Author Leigh Statham was also at the festival, selling her book “Daughter 4254,” a dystopian young adult novel set in a world where the arts are outlawed. She writes books for teenagers because she “never grew up.”

“I love that time of life,” Statham said. “There’s so much possibility and so much emotion and so much pressure.”

For the past three years, the Durham County Library has hosted the Teen Literature Festival, sponsored by the Durham Library Foundation. This is the first year the event took place at a school because the county’s main library, where the event has been held in the past, is undergoing renovations. The library is expected to reopen in early 2019.

“You always want to foster love of reading, and meeting your favorite author can make you a lifelong reader,” said Durham County Library Teen Librarian Caroline Peterson. “But I also want to inspire those teens who want to write.”