

## Library hosts Human Library event

By James Matthews

Variety is the spice of a healthy society, as witnessed at Orangeville Public Library last Saturday.

The library's Mill Street branch hosted the fifth annual Headwaters Human Library last weekend. Such a library is a unique method of fostering dialogue between people who would not likely meet or have occasion to talk to each other. The gatherings are hoped to reduce prejudices and foster understanding among the human books and participating readers.

There were 15 human books at the Orangeville event. Among the topics ? people with whom visitors chatted ? was a bi-sexual polyamorous woman, a transvestite, a gay female OPP officer, a woman of the Muslim faith, a child amputee, a First Nations woman, a participant in a wheelchair, a visually-impaired woman and her service dog, two books dealing with life with Aspergers, an atheist, a male homosexual couple, a heavily tattooed young woman, and a man with multiple visible piercings.

Among the steady flow of readers who filed through the Mill Street branch doors throughout the day were a group of celebrity readers that included Orangeville Mayor Rob Adams, Mono Mayor Laura Ryan, and Orangeville Councillor Mary Rose.

Chief Librarian Darla Fraser said human libraries are held all around the world and on university campuses. And that makes last weekend's event unique in another way.

?It is unique to be held in a centre of Orangeville's size,? she said.

One of the popular books was nine-year-old Kiernan Rogers, a child amputee. He was the youngest book among the 15. A congenital amputee, Kiernan enjoys skiing and karate.

The boy said his first experience as a human book was enjoyable.

?I like being able to share my experience with people,? he said.

His mother, Kathy Rogers, said Kiernan views such exposure as being his responsibility to be welcoming and to answer any questions people may have about his uniqueness.

By putting aside prejudices and giving the library books a chance, the participants?readers and books?could embrace the many and varied facets that comprise society.

?Success will be based on our readership,? Ms. Fraser said.