

Although the subjects of my books—Theodore Roosevelt, James Garfield and Winston Churchill—are, in many ways, very different men, they all had one thing in common: They were voracious readers. Roosevelt read on average a book a day. Garfield’s home was filled with piles of books. Churchill, as a young man in British India, repeatedly asked his mother to send him care packages filled not with food or clothes, but books.

In fact, a love of reading is the one thing that I too share with these three famous men. Like Garfield’s, my home is filled with books, and it always has been. My earliest memories are of going to the library. I used to build an entire day around picking out a stack of books, finding a quiet spot by the windows, and losing myself in story after story until my parents dragged me home. Now I have to drag my own children home from the library because it has become one of their favorite places in the world as well.

I was, therefore, not just honored but absolutely thrilled to be named this year’s honorary chair of the Johnson County Library Foundations’ Stay Home and Read a Book Ball, one of the most important—and fun!—events of the year for Kansas City. I honestly can’t think of anything I’d rather do than stay home and read a book, unless it’s stay home and read a book while supporting a cause that is so close to my heart.

I think that, as Americans, we often forget how lucky we are to have public libraries. If you need a good book; a friendly, knowledgeable person to help you track down information; or just a comfortable, welcoming place to read, write and think, you need only turn to your local library. I used to worry that libraries would fade from use, slowly replaced by computers and internet cafes, but the opposite has happened. Libraries have only become more important to our daily lives. They are vital community centers—not only a wonderful source for books, but for large-scale events, intimate book clubs, art displays, children’s reading hours, teen writing competitions, and, yes, even internet access.

Now it’s our turn to give back, and our friends at the Johnson County Library Foundation have come up with an incredibly easy and fun way to do just that. Even better, it’s something that you’re probably doing every night anyway: sitting down with a good book and encouraging your friends to do the same. Spread the word! Get on social media—#JoCoBookBall—and share pictures of your night at home with your books and whatever else keeps you company while you read—kids, cats, blankets, tea, cookies, more books. While you’re at it, go to www.jocolibraryfoundation.org to make a contribution so that everyone in our community can continue to benefit from our extraordinary library system. As Roosevelt, Garfield, and Churchill could attest, great books—and strong libraries—build great minds!

Warmly,

Candice Millard