

# The Big Read Kodiak Kicks Off This Saturday

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Kodiak can expect to see a lot of Edgar Allan Poe-themed events in the coming months, starting this weekend. Saturday marks the community kick of The Big Read Kodiak, a program of the National Endowment for the Arts. The goal is to promote literacy among all generations using various community gatherings, events and celebrations.

Kodiak's Big Read will take place over six months under the theme of Edgar Allan Poe. Sarah Short has helped organize the program and said Poe was chosen for many reasons, including his historical relevance to Kodiak.

"The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe have graced our shelves for a very long time from Nellie Erskine's library in what is now the Baranov Museum. They've also been at the A. Holmes Johnson Memorial Library and we are looking forward to pulling them off the shelves in the new public library. And so it serves as a vehicle for us to celebrate literacy throughout the ages in our community and in each of the libraries we have loved over all of the years."

Short said Saturday's kick off is meant to really get the ball rolling for the months ahead. It will feature a performance by Isle Bells, as well as visiting performance artist and Poe enthusiast Michael Oakes of the Live Oakes Educational Theater in California.

"And then in addition to that we are going to use this opportunity to distribute books. So as part of the grant requirement we are going to share Edgar Allan Poe's works readily and generously with the community. We've ordered hundreds and hundreds of copies of graphic novels featuring different artists' renditions of a tale or two of Edgar Allan Poe. We also have illustrated children's books that we're going to be giving out, they're beautiful hardcover just incredible pieces of work really, of art work. We're also giving out the entire collected works which is going to be the basis for the Big Read book club."

Short said the book club is only one of many gatherings that will take place over the next few months.

Part of promoting literature means including many different cultures within the community, and Short said they've tried to do that by not just providing English versions of Poe's work.

"Yeah, we also have copies in Spanish and Tagalog that we are going to be giving out throughout the year. The

orders are still coming in and so we have a few in different languages and at this point we will be ordering more later on in the year.”

Saturday’s kick off starts at 7 p.m. in the Gerald C. Wilson Auditorium. Tickets cost \$10 for adults or \$25 for a family. You can stay up to date on other Poe happenings in Kodiak by visiting the Big Read Kodiak’s Facebook page.