# Baraboo highlights people with disabilities through community read

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"Sitting Pretty," a memoir by Rebekah Taussig about growing up disabled, is the focus on this year's Baraboo Reads. A panel discussion about disabilities will take place on August 12 on the UW-Platteville Baraboo Sauk County campus.

HARPER COLLINS

Baraboo Reads has returned. The annual event brings the community together each year to read a book that has a chance to change the way people think about and interact with one another.

This year’s book is [“Sitting Pretty: The View From My Ordinary Resilient Disabled Body,”](https://www.arts.gov/initiatives/nea-big-read/sitting-pretty-view-my-ordinary-resilient-disabled-body) by Rebekah Taussig, a Kansas City-based writer who received a PhD in creative nonfiction and disability studies from the University of Kansas.

The book allows the community to explore the theme of disabilities.

There will be a panel discussion about the book and its themes from 10 a.m. to noon Aug. 12 at the UW-Platteville Baraboo Sauk County Bluffview Café, 1006 Connie Road in Baraboo.

“I am excited for the community to read ‘Sitting Pretty’ because I think it has the chance to shift some people’s paradigms about disability and ableism,” said Eleanor Johnson, in charge of programming and outreach at Baraboo’s Carnegie-Schadde Memorial Public Library. “The author writes eloquently about her experiences and about our culture’s views and treatment of people with disabilities.”

The book, published in 2021, is a memoir in essays that paint a portrait of a body that looks and moves differently from most.

Copies of the book have been made available for free for residents and can be picked up at Carnegie-Schadde Memorial Public Library; the Village Booksmith, at 526 Oak St. in Baraboo; and at UW-Platteville Baraboo Sauk County Student Services, at 207 Lange Center on campus.

“Reading ‘Sitting Pretty’ really opened my eyes to the myriad challenges people who are differently abled deal with every day,” said Sara Roltgen. An academic adviser at UW-Platteville Baraboo Sauk County, she was the one who suggested the book for this year’s Baraboo Reads program.

“Her story is not one of victimhood, but of joys, struggles and a life fully lived,” Roltgen said. “I think her authenticity and humor will allow a broad audience of readers to relate with her and provide readers with compelling discussion points.”

A library in Napa County has one of its books back on the shelf 96 years after it was first checked out.

Part of that discussion will be Mark Jochem. A library consultant in Madison, Jochem — like Taussig — has lived with joys and struggles. Born with cerebral palsy, Jochem will be one of the panelists at the Baraboo Reads event.

“[I am honored to participate as a panelist,” Jochem said. “I hope to share with the audience – and provide them the opportunity to ask questions – part of my own lived experience working and living with cerebral palsy.” Born with spastic diplegia, a type of cerebral palsy, Jochem’s lower body has been affected, resulting in challenges walking and maintaining balance.](https://wiscnews.com/life-entertainment/local/events/mazomanie-woman-proud-to-be-competing-for-miss-wheelchair-america/article_b960ccd8-2314-11ee-8a80-7faf576be9d7.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22tracking-source%3Din-article)

Other panelists include Joe Kimmel and Dennis Hruby.

Roltgen said she hopes Baraboo Reads opens people’s minds “to engage in deeper conversations, stretch our perspectives, and become more compassionate global citizens.”

That’s what Jochem said he wants as well.

“I want participants to have their curiosity piqued about an underrepresented population and their empathy muscles exercised,” he said. “And maybe have their preconceived notions challenged.”

Baraboo Reads was planned by the Baraboo Acts Coalition, the Carnegie-Schadde Memorial Public Library, UW-Platteville Baraboo Sauk County, and the Baraboo Literary Council. It is co-sponsored by the Village Booksmith and the Friends of the Carnegie-Schadde Memorial Public Library.