

Author, racial justice educator set to kick off YWCA of Alton speaker series

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ALTON — An author and “racial justice educator” is set to kick off a YWCA of Alton speaker series on Saturday, Sept. 10 at Alton Middle School.

Debby Irving, author of “Waking up White; and Finding Myself in the Story of Race” will speak from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the school’s auditorium, 2200 College Ave. Admission, which will include a discussion, a question and answer session and a book signing, to the event is free.

The invitation to speak was extended by the Social Justice Committee of the YWCA of Alton, which engages in dialogue on race and works to fulfill the mission to “eliminate racism and provide

Irving will discuss her book detailing her own personal journey in exploring systematic racism. In “Waking up White” she writes that “education is key” to overcoming white racism and educating white people, “Especially about how racism works and how it is possible to be complicit in it. You have to get to the policy makers and the teachers to implement an anti-racist curriculum because it is the older age group that is holding the system in place by perpetuating myths.” Debby now devotes herself to working with white people exploring the impact white skin can have on perception, problem solving, and engaging in racial justice work.

Irving has spoken to hundreds of organizations, corporations, colleges and municipalities to help others bridge the divide within their companies and communities, and is considered a foremost expert in promoting healing between the races.

Kimberly Norwood, editor of “Ferguson’s Fault Lines” will facilitate the event. Norwood is a law professor at Washington University School of Law. She has published several pieces on the meaning of being black in America and on the academic toll black students suffer when confronting the stigma of acting white.

The YWCA of Alton has been a community leader in the fight to eliminate racism and understands that many in the community may be unsure of a way forward, and are challenged to teach their children about racism and prepare them to thrive in a diverse world.

It is the Social Justice committee’s hope that attention to this topic will help the community navigate the issue of racism and prejudice. The committee is planning to present other speakers in the near future as well.

Since 1918, the YWCA of Alton has created opportunities for the community to bring about social change.