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## Off the Shelf:

An e-mail newsletter from the Prince William Public Library System  
May 15, 2009

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Memorial Day

The last Monday of May is Memorial Day, a national holiday to honor all the men and women who have died while in military service to their country. The three-day holiday weekend has also become the unofficial beginning of summer for many Americans.

The actual holiday dates back to 1868, when it was known as Decoration Day and was originally designated by individual states to commemorate the fallen soldiers of the Civil War. Originally, the holiday was celebrated on May 30th. Many southern states refused to observe what was seen as a northern holiday (it was originally decreed by a U.S. General during Reconstruction) which is the genesis of the many separate "Confederate Memorial Days" which are still observed in some states today. After World War I, the holiday was changed to be in honor of all war dead, and with most states adopting it, Memorial Day became an official national holiday in 1967.

There are many opportunities to honor those who have served our Country here in the Washington, DC metro area. At 11 A.M. on Memorial Day, a wreath is ceremoniously laid on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery (<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.org/index.htm>).

In downtown Washington, D.C., the annual Memorial Day Parade gives military and veteran units from across the country an opportunity to receive public recognition and appreciation (<http://dc.about.com/od/specialeventphotos1/ig/Memorial-Day-Parade/>).

The night before Memorial Day, the lawn of the Capital building hosts the PBS "National Memorial Day Concert. If you have ever seen the Capital lit up at night, you already know what a magnificent backdrop it is (<http://www.pbs.org/memoriamdayconcert/>) for a concert!

Of course, another tradition for Memorial Day is to get outside and start enjoying summertime activities. Picnics, day outings at parks, cook-outs in the backyard. . .the library has many books to help you plan a fun (and delicious!) holiday weekend:

Williams-Sonoma Outdoor Entertaining by George Dolese (641.578 Do)

Mary Engelbreit's Dining Out by Mary Engelbreit (641.578 Eng)

Great American Cookout by Gregg R. Gillespie (641.578)

And this just may be the time to get reacquainted with that grill which has been sitting under cover all winter long!

Bobby Flay's Grill It! by Bobby Flay (641.5784 Fla)

Barbeque! Bible by Steven Raichlen (641.5784 Rai)

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## **IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Dark Sky Movement**

Have you noticed in the past few years that the night sky appears brighter and brighter? Whenever one of the local television meteorologists suggests that we go outside to see some

phenomena in the night sky, we often have difficulty because of “light pollution” in our communities. Even well-known observatories are seeing that this light pollution obscures heavenly bodies even when lens-assisted.

The mission of International Dark Sky (<http://www.darksky.org>), a non-profit organization, is to preserve and protect the night-time environment. In this International Year of Astronomy (<http://www.astronomy2009.org>) plan an activity looking at the stars and planets. In October (the 9<sup>th</sup> through the 23<sup>rd</sup>), you can participate in the Great World Wide Star Count ([http://www.windows.ucar.edu/citizen\\_science/starcount/index.html](http://www.windows.ucar.edu/citizen_science/starcount/index.html)).

Take back the night with a few of these library books:

**For Adults:**

*Crowded Universe: The Search for Living Planets* by Alan Bass (523.24 Bas)

*Lives of the Planets: A Natural History of the Solar System* by R. M. Corfield (523.2 Cor)

*Year in the Life of the Universe: A Seasonal Guide to Viewing the Cosmos* by Robert Gendler (520 Gen)

Or try these DVDs for adults:

Journey to the Edge of the Universe (National Geographic, 2008) (DVD 523.2 Jou)

The Universe (A&E) (DVD 523.1)

**For Children:**

*Dwarf Planets* by Robin Birch (J523.49 Bir)

*Planets* by Lynn Stone (J 523.4 Sto)

*Starry Messenger* by Peter Sis (J Bio Galilei)

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