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Ahwatukee YA novelist's new book turns vampire theme on its head

BY PAUL MARYNIAK
AFN Executive Editor

By day, Erin Helm of Ahwatukee is a pretty busy woman as executive director of Kyrene School District's marketing, communications and strategic partnership development.

By night, the married mother of 6-year-old twin daughters also is a pretty busy woman who goes by the name of Erin Jade Lange.

As Lange, she penned five young adult novels, including her first, "Butter," which became a motion picture that played in hundreds of multiplexes across the country earlier this year, is streaming on multiple platforms like Vudu and Starz.

And as of yesterday, June 27, Lange's sixth novel hit brick-and-mortar and online bookshelves, riding the wave of a genre that – pardon the pun – never seems to get old: vampires.

"Mere Mortals" tells the story of two vampire siblings, Charlotte and Reginald Drake, who have been teenagers for centuries.

But because they broke "vampire law," Lange explained, they are transformed into mere mortals.

Figuring out the plot's broad outline is a no-brainer, given the novel's tagline: "Even vampires deserve a coming-of-age story."

What ensues after their fall from immortality, Erin said, is that while they try to get their vampire back

on, "they're having to navigate high school and going through all the things that any human teenager goes through, which is making friends and falling in love and trying to figure out where you fit in."

"Mere Mortals" is not aimed at vampire fiction fans who prefer the creepy and bloody atmospherics of Bram Stoker or Anne Rice.

Rather, it explores themes that have made young adult fiction a thriving subset of the literary market – and one where "Butter" became a hit, resonating among teens with its themes of bullying, social media's power and the desire to belong. Indeed, over the last 10 years,

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Ahwatukee novelist Erin Jade Lange, known in real life as Erin Helm, and her husband Matt Helm have 6-year-old twin daughters, Harper and Grace. (David Minton/AFN Staff Photographer)

Esperanza Lutheran takes lead in major hunger walk

AFN NEWS STAFF

As Asia and Europe struggled to recover from World War II, 17 Christian organizations in 1947 banded together to form a global nonprofit called Church World Service that still comes to the aid of people around the world.

That effort has evolved into a number of different campaigns that include a series of walks to support the Christian Rural Overseas Program, or CROP, which CWS says began in 1947 to help Midwest farmers share grain with needy people abroad.

But the CROP Walk for Hunger really propelled its way to the national scene in 1969, when a Pennsylvania Lutheran minister heard about that effort and decided to try and get young people to join the effort.

That fueled an exponential growth of



Esperanza Lutheran Church members are organizing the Ahwatukee Foothills CROP Hunger Walk Nov. 13. From left, members are Beth Leaf, Michelle Tinsley, Randy Wright, Peggy Hanson, Craig Peck, Chris Armfield and Larry Hanson. (David Minton/AFN Staff Photographer)

across the nation.

This year, members of Esperanza Lutheran Church are adding Ahwatukee to that list of CROP Hunger Walks, whose goal is "ending hunger one step at a time" both in America and around the world.

Esperanza members Beth Leaf, Michelle Tinsley, Randy Wright, Peggy Hanson, Craig Peck, Chris Armfield and Larry Hanson have organized the Ahwatukee Foothills CROP Hunger Walk to raise money with a 1-mile or 3.4-mile walk that will begin at 3:30 p.m. Nov. 13 at Desert Foothills Park, 1010 Marketplace SW, Ahwatukee.

The organizers hope to raise \$25,000, of which 75% will go to Church World Service to support its global mission and the remaining 25% donated to Kyrene Family Resource Center, which provides food and

the hunger walks, which now are held in more than 2,000 communities annually

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