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Anne Tyler novel is gift at Marion House reception

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The Mount Washington Octagon is the showpiece of the USF&G corporation, with its pink brick exterior, gingerbread verandas, and lovely interior. It was the setting for a party to honor Susan Gauvey, chairman of the Marion House Board and one of its most treasured volunteers. The Octagon was built in 1855 as a girl's finishing school and until USF&G bought the complex in 1982, it always housed young women -- even the director of Marion House, Sister Augusta Reilly, lived there when it was the home to novice Sisters of Mercy. That background makes it a most appropriate place for a reception for Marion House, a place that provides homes where homeless and troubled women can go for help.

As I walked in to the reception, guests were being offered tours of the beautiful rooms under the watchful eye of Sue Lovall, from the USF&G Foundation, and Marion House board member Frank Bossle, also a USF&G employee. Meanwhile the guest of honor, who spends her days as a busy attorney at Venable Baetjer & Howard, was greeting those who stopped by to be with her.

Some of the people I saw were Edie House, Pattie and Mike Batza, Lenel Srochi-Meyerhoff, Terri Turner, Carolyn McGuire-Frenkil, Laura Black, Lois Shofer, Jana Lee, Sister Joanne Hanrahan, Sister Sharon Brunier, Rosann Catalano, Elizabeth Haubner, and two outstanding women who graduated from Marion House, so to speak, Cheryl Lewis and Brenda Winterling.

Guests were thrilled to be given an autographed copy of "Ladder of Years," Anne Tyler's latest book, as a memento. The books were donated by Ms. Tyler and her publisher, Alfred Knopf Inc., after Sister Reilly dropped a note and a package about Marion House on Ms. Tyler's front porch.

People were on their most royal behavior for Queen Sirikit of Thailand, while she was in Baltimore to receive an honorary doctorate from Johns Hopkins University for her work with her country's disadvantaged people. Harbor Court Hotel manager Werner Kunz and banquet manager Esther Comeau, who was born in Thailand, greeted her majesty with a bouquet of flowers and a book on Baltimore. And, of course, a red carpet ran from her limo to the

elevator, which would whisk her and her entourage to their rooms.

The queen was hostess at a luncheon for 100 in Harbor Court's Whitehall Ballroom, where guests were served an "all-Maryland" trio of soft shell crab, crab cake and cornmeal-sauteed rockfish. Her guest list included lots of Hopkins-related people, led by Morris Offit, chairman of the school's board of trustees; Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke and his wife, Dr. Patricia Schmoke, and Thailand's Ambassador to the United States Manaspas Xuto.

Finally, I've learned the identity of the woman who literally stopped traffic at the Preakness. She's a singer named Debbie Crawford, who was dressed in a very revealing black dress and huge black hat. That's according to the man on her arm, builder Vince Favazza, who looked pretty spiffy himself that day, but she was definitely a crowd stopper.

As a special thank you to board members and friends of the Living Classrooms Foundation, board president Ed Hale invited them for a harbor cruise on his yacht, the Exuberance.

Many of Maryland's movers and shakers were invited. Among them -- Living Classrooms founder and president Dennis O'Brien; Judge John North, president of the Maritime Museum in St. Michaels; Jay Griswold, Armata Partners; Steve Simms, president of Black and Decker Power Tools; George Collins, CEO T. Rowe Price; Al Leberknight, Towson State University's new dean of the school of business; Bill Scott, head of United Parcel Service; former Gov. William Donald Schaefer; Forrest Bramble, Middendorf Foundation; and Dennis Garrett, Quality Care Medical Service.

With board members like that, it's easy to understand why Living Classrooms is enjoying smooth sailing.

Eunetta Boone, former Evening Sun sports reporter, who left for Hollywood to write television comedy, has been promoted to co-producer of "Living Single," a television series about four African-American women living in a brownstone. Eunetta tells me she sees former Channel 2 anchor Beverly Burke everywhere. As a matter of fact it's hard to miss her, since she's on dozens of billboards around Los Angeles, hyping her 4 p.m. news show.

Former Rep. Helen Delich Bentley has been selected to receive the second annual "Good Scout" Mariners Award at a June 28 luncheon at the Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies in Linthicum. Ms. Bentley is a long-time champion of Baltimore's maritime industry, which sponsors the "Good Scout" luncheon on behalf of the Baltimore Area Council, Boy Scouts of America. Call (410) 338-1700 for ticket information.

Congratulations to William Krawczewicz of Crofton, who was among 13 artists whose work was selected for the U.S. Mint's coins for the Olympic games in Atlanta. Mr. Krawczewicz has been a visual information specialist at the mint since 1990, and his designs were chosen to appear on one 1995 silver coin and two 1996 coins.