

Local author savors the release of her second romance novel within a year

Mickey Brent will appear at the Del Mar Library Oct. 24

BY MICHAEL J. WILLIAMS

It took Encinitas author Mickey Brent 13 years to get her first book into print last fall and only a year to see her second novel published.

New York State-based Bold Strokes Books will officially release "Broad Awakening," on Oct. 16, she said. The firm has been distributing advance copies and publicizing the work, a sequel to Brent's initial effort, "Underwater Vibes."

Both books are available through www.boldstrokesbooks.com as well as online distributors such as Amazon and Goodreads.

"Things are moving along quite well," said Brent by phone from Boston in a recent interview. "Finally having people read my work is exciting."

From Boston, she was traveling to Provincetown, Mass., to participate in several Bold Strokes-sponsored events as part of the annual Women's Week, a lesbian-oriented cultural festival in keeping with the publisher's focus on LGBTQ literature.

The appearance is one of numerous talks and book signings Brent will be doing in the aftermath of the "Broad Awakening" release, including several presentations lined up in North San Diego County and La Jolla.

"I wrote the books because I love writing and because I wanted to give a voice to LGBTQ characters," Brent said. "The more I speak and talk about it, it's almost a form of activism because I'm trying to give a voice to these



Author Mickey Brent COURTESY PHOTOS

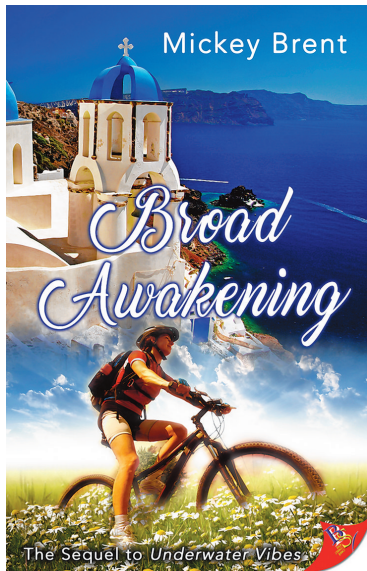
characters representing people who have traditionally been marginalized."

She will be at the Cal State San Marcos Library Reading Room from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 18; the Del Mar Library at 6 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 24; Cardiff-by-the-Sea Library from 2 to 3:30 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 10, and Warwick's book store in La Jolla from 2 to 4 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 18.

The latter is limited to a signing and conversation with the author. More information on Brent's events and books is available at www.mickeybrent.com.

"Broad Awakening" continues where the first book left off in narrating the odyssey of the main character, 40-year-old Brussels resident Helene Dupont, from an unhappy marriage with an insensitive, self-centered husband to an intimate relationship with a younger woman.

"Underwater Vibes" traces the budding friendship between Helene and her swimming instructor, Sylvie, a Greek immigrant to Belgium whom Helene describes as a "goddess."



The cover of "Broad Awakening"

The friendship blossoms into a full-fledged romance in the sequel, while both women wrestle with guilt, fear, and mistrust, given their circumstances.

Whereas Helene questions herself about the appropriateness of her feelings for Sylvie and suspects the latter as having another love interest, Sylvie grapples with her history of badly ending entanglements with married women.

The narrative achieves simmering tension largely because Sylvie is given much more of an individual presence as a character than in the first book. Brent, which is the author's pen name, credited her Bold Strokes Books editor for urging her to escalate Sylvie's prominence.

"I was worried that if I had more coming from Sylvie's head, she would have doubts and feelings like Helene and they would seem like really similar characters," Brent said. "That's why I was hesitant."

"My editor said a lot of people reading the book, especially lesbians, want to see the emotional connections. She convinced me and she was right."

Also, Brent provides a variety of settings, with scenes in Brussels and Greece, and characters, including a gay male couple, one of whom is in a wheelchair, a homeless man, and a grandmotherly psychic.

Brent's third book, on which she is already working, promises to offer even more diverse characters and will be set in San Francisco, where Brent grew up before living in Belgium for 17 years.

"I'm about 120 pages into the new book, which is in an entirely different location and has entirely different characters," she said.

Through her books as well as her public appearances, Brent said, she will continue to promote understanding, tolerance and acceptance.

"I think this is a small step toward getting us toward world peace," she said. "We're all one and we shouldn't be fighting and having wars."

"It's very idealistic, but that's what I think the world should be and I hope the small part I'm playing will help bring us to that."

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