



BRING THE FAMILY
LOOKING FOR ADVENTURE WITH THE KIDS

A fun day going from book stacks to good snacks

WHO: Reporter Mark Shanahan and his daughter, Julia

WHAT: Book shopping/snacking

WHERE: New England Mobile Book Fair/Treat Cupcake Bar

One of my favorite places to spend time on a dreary weekend is the New England Mobile Book Fair in Newton Highlands. When the children were small, I'd browse the store — it's the largest independent bookstore in New England — wandering the warehouse's narrow stacks looking at photography books, field guides, fiction, whatever.

These days I have some company. My 10-year-old daughter, Julia, is an avid reader. There isn't much she won't devour, from "Half Magic" and "Harry Potter" to "Calvin and Hobbes" and the back of a Grape-Nuts box.

Chain stores, like Barnes & Noble, are perfectly adequate, but they lack the charm of the New England Mobile Book Fair, whose knowledgeable staff reminds me of the characters from "Scooby-Doo." And you can't beat the volume — and variety — of the collection, which is stocked floor to ceiling over 35,000 square feet. Opened more than 50 years ago by the Strymish family, the bookstore is currently for sale, and I dearly hope the buyer is someone with the sense to leave it alone.

On a recent visit, Julia and her friend Hale strolled up and down the aisles, pausing occasionally to read the breathless praise on book jackets. The girls weren't looking for anything in particular,

so everything was appealing. Julia settled on "Before I Fall" by Lauren Oliver and "The Far Side Gallery" by Gary Larson, and Hale picked up a copy of "The Daring Book for Girls." We said hello to owner Jon Strymish, who's there every time we are, and then headed out.

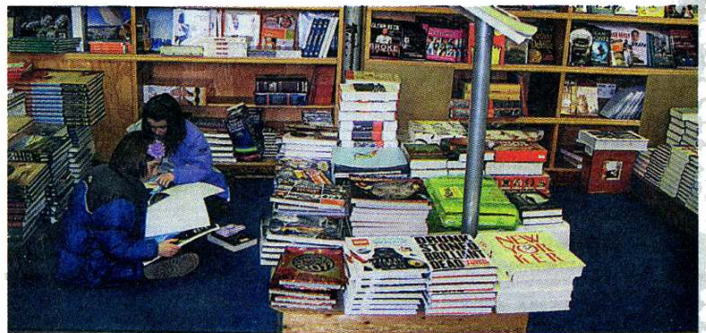
Our last stop of the day was the nearby Treat Cupcake Bar, at the other end of Highland Avenue in Needham. Here, kids can create their own cupcake by mixing and matching cake, frostings, and toppings. Julia and Hale could hardly believe such a place existed.

"This is, like, everyone's dream, isn't it?" said Julia, who topped her gold cake with classic buttercream frosting, white chocolate chips, Gummi Bears, and Nerds. (Hale opted for the chocolate butter cream frosting with Gummi Bears, Nerds, and Reese's Pieces.)

I sat back and got full just watching them eat their custom cupcakes.

MARK SHANAHAN

New England Mobile Book Fair, 82-84 Needham St., Newton Highlands. 617-964-7440. Open Monday through Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Treat Cupcake Bar, 1450 Highland Ave., Needham. 781-444-4995. Open daily 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.



PHOTOS BY MARK SHANAHAN/GLOBE STAFF

Top: Julia Shanahan (left) and Hale Tresselt at Treat Cupcake Bar. **Bottom:** The girls at New England Mobile Book Fair.