



*Downtown Frederick's  
independent bookstore*

## Iguana at a Glance

- NYT and ABA reporting bookstore
- Store size: 1000 square feet
- Store capacity: 25 seated, 65+ standing
- 50 miles from Washington DC and Baltimore MD
- Diverse downtown with local and regional appeal
- Prime location in vibrant arts, shopping, and dining district
- Strong community connections
- Benefit corporation
- Member of ABA and NAIBA



Located in the heart of historic downtown Frederick, Maryland, Curious Iguana attracts customers from local and surrounding areas, including West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, as well as Washington, DC, and Baltimore, Maryland, both within a 50-mile radius.

In addition to being a bookstore and community gathering space, the Iguana is a benefit corporation and donates a percentage of monthly sales to international nonprofits. A globally diverse collection reflects the Iguana's mission of 'Get to Know Your World.'

Since opening in September 2013, Curious Iguana has quickly become a popular literary hub for locals and tourists alike. We offer a thoughtfully curated collection of new books for all ages in a cozy, eclectic, and friendly environment. Our busy events calendar includes:

- Author talks and signings
- Dinner/happy hour with author events
- Monthly book clubs for all ages
- Poetry readings
- 'Love Our Locals' author events
- 'Get to Know Your World' forums
- Indies First and Independent Bookstore Day celebrations

12 North Market Street Frederick, MD 21701  
301.695.2500 • [info@curiousiguana.com](mailto:info@curiousiguana.com)

In addition to our in-store events, we frequently partner with area organizations at off-site events. We serve as the official bookseller for:

- C. Burr Artz Poetry Series: Natasha Trethewey (2014), Kay Ryan (2015)
- Frederick Reads 2015: Ann Patchett
- Frederick Speaker Series 2015: Jane Fonda, Dave Barry, General Stanley McChrystal, Dr. Michio Kaku

## How we market events

- Email newsletter to 1600+ households
- Website calendar at [curiousiguana.com](http://curiousiguana.com)
- Local media, including Frederick News Post and WHAG-TV
- Listings in community calendars, online and print
- Facebook 1770+ likes / @curiousiguana
- Twitter 600+ followers / @iguanabooks
- Instagram and Goodreads
- Window and in-store displays and signage
- Cross promotions with local merchants, restaurants, and nonprofits



## Community partners

- Delaplaine Visual Arts Education Center\*
- Downtown Frederick Partnership
- Frederick County Arts Council
- Frederick County Public Libraries\*
- Frederick County Public Schools
- Frederick Reads
- Literacy Council of Frederick County
- Maryland Ensemble Theatre\*
- National Civil War Medicine Museum\*
- Tourism Council of Frederick County
- Weinberg Center for the Arts\*

\*These organizations, all within walking distance of Curious Iguana, offer venues with seating for 60-1000. Nearby restaurants and churches are also possible locations for author events.

## Colleges within 35-mile radius

- Hood College (within walking distance)
- Frederick Community College
- Mt. St. Mary's College, Emmitsburg, MD
- McDaniel College, Westminster, MD
- Montgomery College, Rockville, MD
- Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, WV



## Event Highlights

Book/Author	Publisher	Books Sold	Attendance
Origami Yoda series/Tom Angleberger/May 2014	Amulet	107	78
Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed/Shannon Elizabeth Bell/May 2014	University of Illinois	39	30
The Girls from Corona del Mar/Rufi Thorpe/July 2014	Knopf	31	27
The Mathematician's Shiva/Stuart Rojstaczer/October 2014	Penguin	21	24
Don't Be Afraid of the Bullets/Laura Kasinof/October 2014	Arcade	20	26
Revolution/Deborah Wiles/October 2014	Scholastic	25	36
The Secret Wisdom of the Earth/Christopher Scotton/January 2015	Grand Central	17	25
Ling & Ting et al/Grace Lin/February 2015	Little, Brown	58	47
We Need Diverse Books event with Lamar Giles, Meg Medina, Ellen Oh, Caroline Richmond, Robin Talley/May 2015	Various	54	75
Bad Days in History/Michael Farquhar/May 2015	National Geographic	52	25
A Passion for Paris/David Downie/May 2015	St. Martin's	32	24
Living the Farm Sanctuary Life/Gene Baur/July 2015	Rodale	33	75

## Independent bookstores turn a new page on brick-and-mortar retailing



*The Curious Iguana bookstore owner Marlene England, left, helps out customer Kasey Smith, 23, Saturday December 14, 2013 in Frederick, Md. Recently there's been a surprising resurgence of independent bookstores like the Curious Iguana that opened in Frederick in September. (Katherine Frey/The Washington Post)*

Bookstores are terminally ill. Borders? Dead. Barnes & Noble? Life support. Amazon is king. E-books are the present and the future. Have tablet, will read.

But in downtown Frederick, Md., Marlene and Tom England are defying the future: They recently opened the Curious Iguana bookstore. It carries books printed on paper. Nonfiction. Poetry. Short stories. That seems insane, right? Some people strolling by certainly think so.

"I've heard them say: 'A bookstore? Who would open up a bookstore these days?'" Marlene said. "I mean really, the door is open. I can heeaaaaaaaar you."

Marlene has not ventured outside to offer the doomsayers a retort, but if she did, it would be this: Independent bookstores are not dead. In fact, in some of the country's most urbane and educated communities, they are making a comeback.

In an e-tailing world, their resurgence is driven by e-book growth that has leveled off, dyed-in-the-wool print lovers who won't (or can't) abandon page flipping, a new category of hybrid reader (the latest mystery, digital; the latest John Irving, print) and savvy retailers such as the Englands, positioning their stores squarely in the buy-local movement and as a respite from screens.

[...] The Englands' objective when they opened the Curious Iguana was to offer something more. They are experienced in the art of throwback retailing. They own Dancing Bear Toys and Gifts, a popular downtown Frederick toy store specializing in toys without batteries. Even in the face of Xboxes, flying toys and children snatching their parents' iPhones to play games, the Dancing Bear's sales have increased every year.

"We think there's a desire by many to go back to a very simple time," Tom England said. "Kids are starting to play Risk again. People want to touch things. They want to be a little low-tech."

The Englands were pondering opening another toy store in a different downtown, but they love Frederick and realized something special was happening there — a rebirth fueled by upscale food, high-end antiques and cute cafes. Their toy store's book section was booming, so they thought of opening a kids bookstore.

But people around town pushed them to open a bookstore for general interest. They visited Politics and Prose one morning. It was packed. They saw statistics showing that indie stores' sales were growing again. And so they took a huge gamble: They moved their toy store off the main street and around the corner, putting the Curious Iguana in its spot.

The walls are a warm purple. Edison lights hang from the ceiling. The hardwood floor creaks. And they gave the store a larger mission, too — sharing a portion of the pro-

ceeds with international nonprofit organizations. Sales, the Englands say, are higher than they expected. One recent Saturday afternoon the store was packed with about two dozen customers.

"We need intimate, small places like this that care about the books they pick," said Lisa Solomon, a Frederick resident holding several children's books. "This isn't just a bookstore. It's more than that."

Ryan Young, 38, dropped \$130 on cookbooks, kids titles and some other hardcovers. She said something that many book buyers would be afraid to utter in an indie store: "I'm an Amazon Prime member." She also admitted to owning and enjoying a Kindle. Lightning did not strike her. That's because she also said this: "Having a book in my hands — nothing stacks up to that."

Young is an emerging positive for indie bookstores: a hybrid reader. About 64 percent of U.S. book buyers prefer reading in both print and digital, according to the Codex Group, which regularly surveys readers. Young reads series mysteries on her Kindle, but literary titles come home in print. Industry statistics show that e-book sales are largely tilted toward genre reading, a trend playing out in Young's life.

"There has to be a value in both," she said. "There are books on my bookshelves that are like my friends. You can go back to them over and over again."

Marlene England is not offended about the Amazon.com remark. "It doesn't have to be an either-or," she said. "You don't have to feel guilty for buying e-books. We all do it — for convenience, for travel, whatever."

[...] The Englands know the risks. "We knew exactly what we're getting into," Tom said.

And besides, Marlene said, "if it all fails, Curious Iguana is a great name for a bar."



## Curious Iguana Goes Global With Donations Under Innovative Business Model

Since its opening in September of last year, Curious Iguana in Frederick, Maryland, has donated more than \$10,000 to international charities through its operations as a benefit corporation.

Owners Marlene and Tom England, who also own Dancing Bear Toys and Gifts in Frederick, learned about the benefit corporation business model from an advisor they had worked with for several years at Maryland's Small Business Development Center. "It just felt like a good fit for us, a way to link our values to our business, a way to hold us — and any future owners

of our business — accountable to this idea of a broader purpose that's not all about profits," said Marlene England.

As a benefit corporation, Curious Iguana aims to donate at least five percentage of net sales each month to global nonprofit organizations. "It's written into our corporate documents that the purpose of our benefit corporation is 'to create a general public benefit,'" said England. Cur-



rently, Curious Iguana funds microlending through Kiva, a nonprofit that helps alleviate poverty by creating opportunities for people in more than 80 different countries. The store also donates to nonprofits associated with its events

or with customers who volunteer internationally.

The benefit corporation business model is relatively new. Maryland became the first state to pass legislation to allow benefit corporations in 2010, with 25 states and the District of Columbia following, according to the Benefit Corp Information Center. Just over 1,000 organizations are registered as benefit corporations thus far, including some national brands, such as

Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps, Patagonia, and King Arthur Flour.

The process to establish Curious Iguana as a benefit corporation was facilitated by an attorney who was well-versed in developing these types of businesses. The Englands had to deal with plenty of paperwork, but what took the most energy was "how best to implement it, how to explain it to our customers, and what percentage we

could afford to donate ... because, after all, if our business fails, there won't be any money to give away!" said England.

Customers visiting Curious Iguana will see behind the store's counter a large world map with pins denoting the countries and regions where contributions have been sent, along with a list of nonprofits that have received donations. England suspects that many customers don't know about the store's work as a benefit corporation, but, "those who do know seem pleased that their dollars are in some small way making a difference way beyond the walls of our bookstore."

Last November, the store supported the child literacy program Cambodia Reads, which was initiated by a resident of Frederick, Maryland, and whose board members are frequent customers at Curious Iguana. The store has also supported Children of Promise, Children of Hope, which was established by another store customer to promote literacy in a rural community in the Dominican Republic. "We've also donated to The Malala Fund, typhoon relief projects in the Philippines, and girls' education programs in Africa, along with many other smaller projects through Kiva," said England.

The Englands are modest about the work they do to support these causes, though part of being a benefit corporation is making customers aware of where funds are going

and what objectives are being met. "I think it's important for our customers to understand that part of the money they spend in our little bookstore in downtown Frederick is part of a bigger picture around the world," said England. "I've talked to customers who say they will only buy books from us because they want to support an indie bookstore rather than a faceless corporation. I think they see it as added value — kind of the icing on the cake — that their purchase also supports a larger mission of helping people around the world."



Curious Iguana remains, at heart, a traditional independent bookstore. Working with less than 1,000 square feet, the Englands curate its inventory to incorporate global themes, particularly in the children's section. The inventory "speaks to our store's mission of 'Get to know your world,'" said Eng-

land. Like other independent booksellers, Curious Iguana is involved with its downtown community as well as with area schools and libraries.

England knows that Curious Iguana is not alone in its support of good. "I've yet to meet any small business owner who isn't generous to a fault and always willing to support non-profits and other worthy causes," she said. But she remains thrilled with the way the store has been able to support these global causes. "I would never have imagined we could give so much in our first year. I am so grateful to our amazing customers because it's their support that has enabled this to happen."

## Local Maryland retailers are making a global impact



To succeed in retail today, you have to be exceptional – not only with the product or service you’re selling, but also in the experience you provide and the community you create and nurture. After opening our second retail store, we’re more conscious of this now than ever before.

More than a decade ago, we opened a neighborhood toy store in downtown Frederick, Maryland, and always felt that we had a responsibility to support the community that sustains us. Over the years, we’ve helped local schools and nonprofits that assist children and families in need. But we always dreamed of doing more, and wanted to expand our focus to include giving internationally.

At the same time, our customers kept telling us how much they want an independent bookstore in the neighborhood. As we were deciding whether or not to take the plunge with a second store, we learned about benefit corporations. It’s a perfect fit for us, since we want Curious Iguana to be positioned from the start as a unique company that does well by doing good.

The new store opened in September 2013, and is set up to share proceeds with international nonprofits that are making a world of difference. Curious Iguana staff and customers help us select recipients of Kiva microfinance loans, and we mark the global locations on a world map behind the counter. Many customers ask about the map, and it gives us an opportunity to show where our donations have had an impact so far. It seems to resonate with customers that where they shop and what they buy really does make a difference. Whether it’s a fair trade keychain or the latest indie bestseller, whatever our customers purchase at the Iguana has an impact far beyond our little shop on Market Street.

We always wanted to be entrepreneurs, and we’ve always been passionate about retail. As much as we’re excited about bringing a new store to downtown Frederick, we’re even more excited about connecting with a community of people who care about the world we share. It sounds trite, but it’s true: Even the smallest efforts can have a positive impact.