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Contact: Margie Byers A.P.R
Lee County Library System
239.533.4826

mbyers@leegov.com

or

Contact: Betsy Clayton, A.P.R.
Communications Director
Lee County Government
239-826-4606

bclayton@leegov.com

Crime, Romance and Suspense coming to the Southwest Florida Reading Festival

Fort Myers, FL, Jan. 14, 2016 – Two dozen nationally acclaimed and best-selling authors are coming to Fort Myers to meet fans and talk about their books at the 17th annual Southwest Florida Reading Festival on March 19 at the Harborside Event Center and Centennial Park in the Fort Myers River District. The Reading Festival brings in popular authors for adults, teens and children from all over the country to stimulate the community and encourage a community-wide culture of reading for pleasure and personal development. The festival is a day-long event filled with fascinating and dynamic author presentations, lively programs and activities for teens and children, the latest library technology, contests, booksellers, book signings, a free book for every child and teen and the Reading Rocks! Teen Battle of the Bands! The Festival draws an average of 18,000 people annually.

The Reading Festival is the largest one-day reading festival in Florida and is designated a “Top 20 Event in the Southeast” for the month of March by the Southeast Tourism Society.

“The festival invites popular authors to participate by sharing their real life experiences, thought processes and the evolution of their characters,” says Reading Festival coordinator Margie Byers. “It is fascinating to hear how they craft their page-turner plots and tie all the details together.”

The festival kicks-off Friday evening, March 18 with the Evening with the Authors at the Marina at Edison Ford, where the authors meet, mingle and dine with attendees. A few of the award-winning authors scheduled to attend the events include adult authors: Meg Cabot, Paul Doiron, Debbie Macomber; teen authors: Joelle Charbonneau and Trish Dollar; children’s authors: Candace Fleming and Eric Rohmann and many more. The complete list of authors can be found at www.readfest.org.

The Reading Festival is free and is 100 percent community supported through generous donations, sponsorships and grants. To help ensure the continuation of this free community event visit www.readfest.org to make a secure online donation. Author information, dates of partner events, directions to the event and more, is available for your convenience 24 hours a day at www.readfest.org or call 239-479-4636.

ABOUT THE SOUTHWEST FLORIDA READING FESTIVAL

Lee County Library System produces the Southwest Florida Reading Festival to inform the community about the resources and services available at their local Lee County libraries and to remind them these resources and services are free with a library card. The Reading Festival is free and serves all ages and a variety of cultures with presentations from best-selling authors. Some of the authors who have attended in the past include: Sue Monk Kidd, Susan Mallery, R.L. Stine, Janet Evanovich, Nelson DeMille, Erik Larson, Jeff Lindsay and several hundred more.

The Reading Festival’s objectives are to promote reading and literacy; bring awareness of the library’s programs and resources; foster partnerships between the Lee County Library System and the community. The Reading Festival helps build a literate community and improve the local standard of living. The Reading Festival helps children and teens to develop an interest in reading independently and therefore an increase in vocabulary and writing; increases family bonding and reading time; positively affects the attitude and behavior of families and the community regarding reading; develops a more educated and enriched community. For more information go to www.ReadFest.org

(Note: book jackets and author images are available. Contact cbarr@leegov.com)

Chantel Acevedo’s most recent novel, *The Distant Marvels*, was published by Europa Editions, and chosen as an Indie Next Pick. Acevedo's other novels include *Love and Ghost Letters*, which won the Latino International Book Award and was a finalist for the Connecticut Book of the Year; *Song of the Red Cloak*, a historical novel for young adults; and *A*

Falling Star, winner of the Doris Bakwin Award and National Bronze Medal IPPY Award. Her fiction and poetry have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *American Poetry Review*, *North American Review* and *Chattahoochee Review*, among many others. Acevedo founded the Auburn Writers Conference, and was awarded an Alabama State Council of the Arts Fellowship. She is currently an associate professor of English in the MFA Program of the University of Miami. Visit www.chantelacevedo.com

James O. Born is the author of five police thrillers from Putnam. *Escape Clause* was the winner of the inaugural Florida Book award for best novel in popular fiction. He coauthored *Border War* with legendary commentator Lou Dobbs. His newest novel, *Scent Of Murder*, features a police K-9 unit in Florida. Born is a former U.S. Drug Agent and state law enforcement agent. Many of his novels are drawn directly from his training and experience. Visit www.jamesoborn.com

Allison Brennan is The New York Times bestselling author of more than two dozen thrillers and many short stories. She currently writes the *Lucy Kincaid* FBI thriller series and the *Maxine Revere* cold case mystery series. Allison lives near Sacramento, Calif., with her husband, five kids and assorted pets. Visit www.allisonbrennan.com

Meg Cabot was born in Bloomington, Indiana. In addition to her adult contemporary fiction, she is the author of the bestselling young adult fiction series, *The Princess Diaries*. Over 25 million copies of her novels for children and adults have sold worldwide. Meg lives in Key West with her husband. Visit www.megcabot.com

Lauren Dane is a New York Times and USA Today bestselling author of over 60 novels and novellas. She has three wild children, a patient husband and a terrible addiction to the Internet. Visit www.laurendane.com

Paul Doiron is the bestselling author of the *Mike Bowditch* series of crime novels, including most recently *The Precipice*. His first book, *The Poacher's Son*, won the Barry Award, the Strand Critics Award, and was a finalist for the Edgar Award. Visit www.pauldoiron.com

Lorelei James is The New York Times and USA Today bestselling author of the *Mastered* and *What You Need* contemporary romance series. She is also the author of the *Blacktop Cowboys* and *Rough Riders* contemporary western romance series. Lorelei lives in western South Dakota with her family. Visit www.loreleijames.com

Cassandra King is The New York Times bestselling author of five novels as well as numerous short stories, essays and articles. Her latest release is *The Same Sweet Girls Guide to Life*. A native of L. A. (Lower Alabama), Cassandra resides in Beaufort, South Carolina. Visit www.cassandrakingconroy.com

Debbie Macomber, the author of the upcoming *A Girl's Guide to Moving On*, *Last One Home*, *Silver Linings*, *Love Letters*, *Mr. Miracle*, *Blossom Street Brides* and *Rose Harbor in Bloom*, is a leading voice in women's fiction. Nine of her novels have hit #1 on the New York Times bestseller lists and three of her beloved Christmas novels have been hit movies on the Hallmark Channel, including *Mrs. Miracle* and *Mr. Miracle*. Hallmark also produces the hit original series *Debbie Macomber's Cedar Cove*, based on the author's Cedar Cove books. She has more than 200 million copies of her books in print worldwide. Visit www.debbiemacomber.com

Jacquelyn Mitchard is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of 20 books for adults, young adults and children. The editor-in-chief of Merit Press, a realistic young adult imprint, Mitchard's work has won or been nominated for the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction, the U.K.'s Talkabout Prize, the Shirley Jackson Award and the Bram Stoker Award. She lives on Cape Cod with her family. Visit www.jacquelynmitchard.com

Daniel Palmer is the author of six critically-acclaimed suspense novels. After receiving his master's degree from Boston University, he spent a decade as an e-commerce pioneer. A recording artist, accomplished blues harmonica player and lifelong Red Sox fan, Daniel lives in New Hampshire with his wife and two children where he is currently at work on his next novel. Visit www.danielpalmerbooks.com

Ana Sofía Peláez covers the spectrum of Spanish and Latin American cuisine on her blog hungrysofia.com. Since then, the site has been featured by InStyle magazine, Food 52, and the New York Times and was nominated by Saveur as one of the Best Regional Cuisine blogs of 2012. She has become a regular contributor to the Cooking Channel's *Devour the Blog* and *The Latin Kitchen*. Her first cookbook, *The Cuban Table* was nominated for a James Beard Award.

Jodi Thomas is a New York Times and USA Today bestselling author of 40 novels and 13 short story collections. As of July 2006, she was the 11th woman to be inducted into RWA Hall of Fame. She currently serves as the Writer in Residence at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas. Visit www.jodithomas.com

Kate White, the former Editor-In-Chief of Cosmopolitan, is The New York Times bestselling author of 10 novels of suspense, including six *Bailey Weggins* mysteries. Her most recent book is *The Wrong Man*. She is also the editor of the *Mystery Writers of America Cookbook*. Visit www.katewhite.com

CHILDREN

Jen Arena is a full-time author and freelance editor and has written many books for kids, including *Besos for Baby*, *100 Snowmen*, *Slinky*, *Scaly Snakes*, *Pink Snow and Other Weird Weather*, and coming in 2016, *Lady Liberty's Holiday* and *Marta Big and Small*. Visit www.jenarenabooks.com

Eric Elfman is the award-winning author of 14 books for kids including *Tesla's Attic*, *Edison's Alley* and *Hawking's Hallway*, co-written with Neal Shusterman. Eric is also a screenwriter and a private writing coach. Visit www.elfmanworld.com

Sherri Duskey Rinker's first picture book, *Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site* was inspired by her youngest son's tireless (literally!) obsession with trucks. The book, released in May 2011, has received critical acclaim, became an instant best seller (including hitting #1 on the NYT and spending over two years on the list), and has received numerous honors. Her second book, *Steam Train, Dream Train*, debuted at #1 on the NYT bestseller list and has spent over six months on the NYT. Her third book, set to release for Valentine's Day, 2016, is titled *Since There Was You* and will be illustrated by Patrick McDonnell. Visit www.SherriDuskeyRinker.com

Neal Shusterman, winner of the 2015 National Book Award for *Challenger Deep*, is co-author of *The Accelerati Trilogy*, with Eric Elfman (*Tesla's Attic*, *Edison's Alley*, and *Hawking's Hallway*) as well as the author of the *Unwind Dystology*, *Everlost*, *Bruiser* and more than 30 other books for teens and young people. Visit www.storyman.com

Elissa Brent Weissman is an award-winning author for 8-12-year olds. Her most recent book, *Nerd Camp 2.0*, is a sequel to the critically acclaimed *Nerd Camp*, which was a best summer read in The Washington Post and is on the 2015-2016 SSSYRA list. Visit www.ebweissman.com

Salina Yoon is an award-winning author/illustrator of nearly 200 books for children including *Be a Friend*, *Penguin and Pinecone*, *Penguin on Vacation*, *Penguin in Love*, *Penguin and Pumpkin*, *Penguin's Big Adventure*, *Found* and *Stormy Night*. She studied art and design at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Calif., and now lives in San Diego with her family. Visit www.salinayoon.com

TEEN

Joelle Charbonneau has performed in opera and musical theatre productions across Chicagoland. She now teaches private voice lessons and is the author of The New York Times and USA Today bestselling *The Testing* trilogy (*The Testing*, *Independent Study* and *Graduation Day*) as well as two adult mystery series. Her YA books have appeared on the Indie Next List, on the YALSA Top 10 books for 2014 as well as the YALSA Quick Picks for reluctant readers and state reading lists across the country. Her newest standalone YA thriller, *Need*, has been optioned for a feature film and is currently in development. Visit www.joellecharbonneau.com

Trish Doller is the author of the critically-acclaimed young adult novel *Something Like Normal*. A former radio personality, she lives in Fort Myers with a relentlessly optimistic border collie and a pirate. Visit www.trishdoller.com

Meg Medina is the author of the young adult novels *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*, which received the Pura Belpré Author Award, and *The Girl Who Could Silence the Wind* as well as the picture books *Mango*, *Abuela*, and *Me* and *Tía Isa Wants a Car*, winner of an Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Award. She lives in Richmond, Virginia. Visit www.megmedina.com