

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Southwest Florida Reading Festival Features Fun, Fear and Fantasy**

Fort Myers, FL, Feb. 17, 2016 – As with all well-written storylines, the lineup of authors at the annual Southwest Florida Reading Festival has taken a couple of twists and turns. Don't worry; there is still great suspense, humor and fun to be found at the festival on 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, March 19, at Harborside Event Center and Centennial Park in downtown Fort Myers.

The Reading Festival will feature 23 best-selling authors for adults, teens and children. These authors plan to attend the festival from all over the country to help inspire daily reading, to remind the community that books change lives for the better, as well as sell their newly released books. The festival is a daylong event filled with fascinating and dynamic author presentations, lively programs and activities for teens and children, the latest library technology, contests, book-sellers, 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.

"It is so entertaining to speak with these imaginative people," says Reading Festival coordinator Margie Byers. "Their stories about their writing experiences are as entertaining as the books themselves."

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: Neal Shusterman, Eric Rohmann and many more. The complete list of authors can be found at [www.readfest.org](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.ReadFest.org)

## ADULT

**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](http://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](http://www.jamesoborn.com)

**Allison Brennan** is The New York Times best-selling 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](http://www.allisonbrennan.com)

**Meg Cabot** was born in Bloomington, Indiana. In addition to her adult contemporary fiction, she is the author of the best-selling 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](http://www.megcabot.com)

**Lauren Dane** is a New York Times and USA Today best-selling 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](http://www.laurendane.com)

**Paul Doiron** is the best-selling 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](http://www.pauldoiron.com)

**NEW Kisty Woodson Harvey** Kristy Woodson Harvey is the author of "Dear Carolina" and "Lies and Other Acts of Love." She blogs at Design Chic about how creating a beautiful home can be the catalyst for creating a beautiful life and loves connecting with readers at [kristywoodsonharvey.com](http://kristywoodsonharvey.com). Her writing has appeared in numerous publications and websites, including *Southern Living*, *Domino* magazine, *Our State*, *Houzz*, the *Salisbury Post* and the *New Bern Sun Journal*. She lives in North Carolina with her husband and 4-year-old son where she is working on her next novel. Visit [www.kristywoodsonharvey.com](http://www.kristywoodsonharvey.com).

**Lorelei James** is The New York Times and USA Today best-selling 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](http://www.loreleijames.com)

**CANCELLED Cassandra King** is The New York Times best-selling 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](http://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 best-seller lists and three of her Christmas novels have been 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](http://www.debbiemacomber.com)

**Jacquelyn Mitchard** is the No. 1 New York Times best-selling 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](http://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](http://www.danielpalmerbooks.com)

**Ana Sofía Peláez** covers the spectrum of Spanish and Latin American cuisine on her blog [hungrysofia.com](http://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 best-selling author of 40 novels and 13 short story collections. As of July 2006, she was the 11<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.jodithomas.com)

**Kate White**, the former Editor-In-Chief of Cosmopolitan, is The New York Times best-selling 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.elfmanworld.com)

**Sherri Duskey Rinker's** first picture book, "Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site" was inspired by her youngest son's tireless obsession with trucks. The book, released in May 2011, has received critical acclaim, became an instant best-seller (including hitting No. 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 No. 1 on the NYT best-seller list and has spent over six months on the NYT. Her third book, is to release for Valentine's Day, 2016, is titled "Since There Was You" and is illustrated by Patrick McDonnell. Visit [www.SherriDuskeyRinker.com](http://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 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](http://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 SSYRA list. Visit [www.ebweissman.com](http://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, California, and now lives in San Diego with her family. Visit [www.salinayoon.com](http://www.salinayoon.com)

## TEEN

**Meg Cabot** was born in Bloomington, Indiana. In addition to her adult contemporary fiction, she is the author of the best-selling 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](http://www.megcabot.com)

**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 best-selling "The Testing" trilogy ("The Testing," "Independent Study" and "Graduation Day") as well as two adult mystery series. Her young adult 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 young adult thriller, "Need," has been optioned for a feature film and is currently in development. Visit [www.joellecharbonneau.com](http://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](http://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](http://www.megmedina.com)