

**Immediate Release**

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**Southwest Florida Reading Festival a 'Top 20 Event'**

*Southeast Tourism Society has saluted region's best events since 1985*

ATLANTA, Ga. (Sept. 22, 2015) – The Southeast Tourism Society (STS) has named the Southwest Florida Reading Festival as one of the STS Top 20 Events in the Southeast for March 2016. The Reading Festival to be held March 19, 2016, is also the second largest reading or book festival in Florida. The STS Top 20 Events program has highlighted events and festivals around the Southeast since 1985.

The festival is a premier literary event with an annual line-up of more than 25 nationally acclaimed, best-selling authors for all reading interests. It is a fun, free event for all ages and draws an average of 18,000 people to downtown Fort Myers for the day. The fans attend to hear and meet best-selling authors from all over the country, participate in contests and activities and find the latest and greatest in books, technology and accessories. The adult area is in Harborside and the youth and family area is outside in Centennial Park. There are over 15 venues with concurrent activities and entertainment. There is a marketplace which hosts over 90 vendors split between the adult and youth areas. In addition to author appearances, there are programs and shows for the youth, a free book for every child and teen, a Teen Battle of the Bands, crafts, graffiti and chalk wall and more.

“The Southeast Tourism Society’s Top 20 Festival and Event list is an excellent guide for the Southeast’s visitors and residents. Events selected represent the best, and often most unique, activities in our region,” said Bill Hardman, president and CEO of the Southeast Tourism Society.

Travel industry experts select 20 events per month, and STS publicizes them throughout the United States. The complete list is published on two websites: [EscapeToTheSoutheast.com](http://EscapeToTheSoutheast.com) and [Travel Media Press Room](http://TravelMediaPressRoom.com). Events considered for the STS Top 20 recognition must be at least 3 years old and have attendance of at least 1,000. Nomination forms and deadlines are available at [SoutheastTourism.org](http://SoutheastTourism.org) or by calling 770-542-1523.

STS, founded in 1983 and headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting tourism to and within 12 states – Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

The Reading Festival 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.

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