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**23rd Annual Southwest Florida Reading Festival announces 2022 author lineup**

Fort Myers, FL, Dec. 1, 2021 – More than 20 acclaimed and bestselling authors are coming to Fort Myers to showcase their books and meet fans at the 23rd annual Southwest Florida Reading Festival held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, March 5, 2022. The festival will be hosted on the downtown Fort Myers Regional Library campus located at 2450 First St.

The Southwest Florida Reading Festival is a free, all-ages, annual outdoor event. Fans have the opportunity to listen to and meet a diverse line-up of bestselling authors, participate in contests and activities and find the latest and greatest in books and technology. In addition to author appearances and autograph sessions, there will be food truck vendors, storytelling programs, arts and crafts, youth writing contests and a free book for every child and teenager.

The lineup of award-winning authors scheduled to attend the next festival includes adult authors Alafair Burke, Tim Dorsey, J.A. Jance, Nathaniel Philbrick, Kate Quinn and Brad Taylor, among others. Some of the youth and teen authors include Adrianna Cuevas, Stacy McNulty, Jenna Evans Welch, Alex Willan and Adrienne Young. The complete list of authors can be found by downloading the festival's new, mobile app "SWFL ReadFest" at the App Store, Google Play or by visiting the festival website at [www.ReadFest.org](http://www.ReadFest.org).

"We are so excited to be able to introduce a new, mobile app for the festival this year," said festival organizer Melissa Baker, manager of programming and community outreach for the Lee County Library System. "We encourage everyone to download the app to learn more about our fabulous authors and stay up to date about the event as it develops."

In addition to the daylong community event, Lee County Library System will offer virtual components for festival participants to enjoy. Among the activities planned are virtual author presentations, an online book discussion, grab-and-go festival bingo and virtual reading and activity challenges through the READSquared app.

"However people choose to engage with our event, in-person or virtually, we hope they will find the Reading Festival to be a fun and memorable experience," Lee County Library System Director Mindi Simon said. "Having the opportunity to meet an author, learn about the writing process, and the story behind the stories is a centerpiece of our festival."

Attendees who want more exclusive access to meet and mingle with this year's festival authors can participate in *An Evening with the Authors*, a fundraising dinner scheduled to take place at the Edison Restaurant, Bar and Banquet Center on March 4. Tickets can be purchased online at the Reading Festival website [www.ReadFest.org](http://www.ReadFest.org).

The Southwest Florida Reading Festival is free and community-supported through donations, sponsorships and grants. To help ensure the continuation of this free community event, please visit [www.ReadFest.org](http://www.ReadFest.org) to make a secure online donation. More information is available at [www.ReadFest.org](http://www.ReadFest.org) or by calling 239-533-4832.

**ABOUT THE SOUTHWEST FLORIDA READING FESTIVAL**

The Southwest Florida Reading Festival is a family-friendly event that celebrates books and the written word. The festival began in 1999 with the goals of emphasizing the importance of reading and bringing

the finest literary talent to Southwest Florida. Now in its 23rd year, the free festival authors including Sue Monk Kidd, Susan Mallery, Zane, R.L. Stine, Janet Evanovich, Diana Gabaldon, Nelson DeMille, Jeff Kinney and hundreds more.

The Reading Festival's objectives are to promote reading and literacy, increase awareness of library programs and foster partnerships between the Lee County Library System and the community. It is also an opportunity to share with the community the resources and services available at local Lee County libraries with a library card. The Reading Festival aims to build a literate community by encouraging children to develop an interest in reading independently, which fosters an increase in vocabulary and improved writing skills. For more information, go to [www.ReadFest.org](http://www.ReadFest.org).

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**The complete author list and short biographies are below.**

### **Adult Authors**

**Xio Axelrod** is a USA Today bestselling author of award-winning romantic fiction. Xio grew up in the music industry and began recording at a young age. When she isn't writing stories, she can be found in the studio, writing songs or performing on international stages (under a different, not-so-secret name). She lives in Philadelphia with one full-time husband and several part-time cats. Visit [xioaxelrod.com](http://xioaxelrod.com).

**Alafair Burke** is a New York Times bestselling author whose most recent novels include "The Better Sister," "The Wife," which is under production for a feature film, and "The Ex," which was nominated for the Edgar Award for best novel. She is the co-author of the bestselling "Under Suspicion" series with Mary Higgins Clark. A former prosecutor, she now teaches criminal law and lives in Manhattan and East Hampton. Visit [alafairburke.com](http://alafairburke.com).

**Tim Dorsey** is a Florida author who draws on his rich experience as a police reporter, political contributor and metro night editor with The Alabama Journal and Tampa Tribune. He left reporting behind in 1999 to write full time. "Florida Roadkill" is the first in his series of wildly funny novels. His latest release is "Mermaid Confidential." Visit his website at [timdorsey.com](http://timdorsey.com).

**M.E. Hilliard** is a full-time librarian who started out in retail merchandising. After 12 years of mergers, consolidations and moves around the country, she went to graduate school and got a Master of Library Science degree. Originally from the Connecticut shoreline, she has never lost her love of quaint small towns, big cities and fashion, so she indulges that in her writing. A life-long lover of mystery fiction, M.E. currently lives and works in Florida. Visit [mehilliard.wordpress.com](http://mehilliard.wordpress.com).

**Joe Ide** is of Japanese American descent. Growing up in South Central Los Angeles, Joe's favorite books were the Conan Doyle Sherlock Holmes stories. The idea that a person could face the world and vanquish his enemies with just his intelligence fascinated him. Joe went on to earn a graduate degree and had several careers before writing his debut novel, "IQ," inspired by his early experiences and his love of Sherlock Holmes. Joe lives in Santa Monica, California. Visit [joeide.com](http://joeide.com).

**J.A. Jance** is The New York Times bestselling author of the "Ali Reynolds" series, the "J.P. Beaumont" series and the "Joanna Brady" series, as well as five interrelated Southwestern thrillers featuring the Walker family. Born in South Dakota and raised in Bisbee, Arizona, Jance lives with her husband in Seattle, Washington. Visit her online at [JAJance.com](http://JAJance.com).

**Sophie Jordan** is The New York Times and USA Today bestselling author of Avon historical romances for adults and young adult fantasy novels. A Texan and former high school English teacher, she also writes paranormal romance under the name Sharie Kohler. Visit her online at [sophiejordan.net](http://sophiejordan.net).

**Nathaniel Philbrick** is the author of six New York Times bestsellers including "In the Heart of the Sea," winner of the National Book Award and the basis of the 2015 film directed by Ron Howard; "Mayflower," a

finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in History and three books about the American Revolution, including “Valiant Ambition,” winner of the George Washington Book Prize. His most recent book is “Travels with George: In Search of Washington and His Legacy.” He lives on Nantucket Island with his wife Melissa and their dog Dora. Visit [nathanielphilbrick.com](http://nathanielphilbrick.com).

**Craig Pittman** is a native Floridian, author and award-winning reporter. Born in Pensacola, he graduated from Troy State University in Alabama, where his muckraking work for the student paper prompted an agitated dean to label him “the most destructive force on campus.” After 31 years at the Tampa Bay Times, he now writes a weekly column for the Florida Phoenix and is co-host of the popular podcast “Welcome to Florida.” He’s the author of six nonfiction books about Florida, including The New York Times bestseller “Oh, Florida: How America’s Weirdest State Influences the Rest of the Country.” His latest release is “The State You’re In: Florida Men, Florida Women and Other Wildlife.” Visit [craigpittman.com](http://craigpittman.com).

**Kate Quinn** is the New York Times and USA Today bestselling author of historical fiction. A native of Southern California, she attended Boston University, where she earned a bachelor’s and master’s degree in classical voice. A lifelong history buff, she has written four novels in the Empress of Rome Saga and two books set in the Italian Renaissance before turning to the 20<sup>th</sup> century with “The Alice Network,” “The Huntress” and “The Rose Code.” All have been translated into multiple languages. She and her husband live in California with three rescue dogs. Visit [katequinnauthor.com](http://katequinnauthor.com).

**Shauna Robinson’s** love of books led her to try a career in publishing before deciding she’d rather write books instead. Originally from San Diego, she lives in Virginia with her husband and their sleepy greyhound. Shauna is an introvert at heart. She spends most of her time reading, baking and figuring out the politest way to avoid social interaction. “Must Love Books” is her debut novel. Visit [shaunarobinsonbooks.com](http://shaunarobinsonbooks.com).

**Brad Taylor**, Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.), is a 21-year veteran of the U.S. Army Infantry and Special Forces, including eight years with the 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment – Delta. Taylor retired in 2010 having participated in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. In 2011, Brad published his debut novel, One Rough Man, which was an immediate success and launched the Pike Logan series. Since then, Brad has written 15 New York Times bestsellers. He lives in Charleston, South Carolina, with his wife and two daughters. Visit [bradtaylorbooks.com](http://bradtaylorbooks.com).

### **Children’s Authors**

**Adrianna Cuevas** is the author of the Pura Belpré honor book “The Total Eclipse of Nestor Lopez,” “Cuba in My Pocket” and “The Ghosts of Rancho Espanto.” She is a first-generation Cuban-American originally from Miami. A former Spanish and ESOL teacher, Adrianna currently resides in Austin, Texas, with her husband and son. Visit [www.adriannacuevas.com](http://www.adriannacuevas.com).

**Stacy McNulty** is a children’s book author, who used to be a mechanical engineer and still dreams of being an astronaut. She’s written more than 30 books, including the middle-grade novel “The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl,” an Indie Bestseller, Sunshine State Young Readers award winner and winner of the Mathical Book Prize. Visit [stacymcnulty.com](http://stacymcnulty.com).

**Kayla Miller** is a New York Times bestselling author and illustrator living and working in New York. They have a BFA in Illustration from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. When not busy working on graphic novels, Kayla enjoys watching bad movies, trying to cook new recipes, playing games and reading other people’s graphic novels. Visit [kayla-miller.com](http://kayla-miller.com).

**Baptiste Paul** is the award-winning author of “The Field,” “To Carnival!” and “I Am Farmer: Growing an Environmental Movement in Cameroon.” His works have garnered many starred reviews from Kirkus, Booklist and School Library Journal. Several titles have been translated into multiple languages. He loves writing stories inspired by his childhood in Saint Lucia and featuring words from his native language,

Creole. Baptiste is a mentor for We Need Diverse Books and the co-author of several works with Miranda Paul, including their newest collaboration, "Peace." He lives in Wisconsin with his family. Visit [baptistepaul.net](http://baptistepaul.net).

**Miranda Paul** is the award-winning author of more than a dozen books for children, including "Speak Up!," "Right Now: Real Kids Speaking Up for Change" and "Little Libraries, Big Heroes," which features the story behind the Little Free Library movement. She is a founding member of the organization We Need Diverse Books, and lives with her family in Wisconsin. Visit [mirandapaul.com](http://mirandapaul.com).

**Alex Willan** grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, where he was seldom seen without his sketchbook in hand. His love of drawing led him to earn a BFA in illustration from Savannah College of Art and Design. Alex has exhibited in art galleries and has painted murals, theater sets and squirmy kids' faces, but his true love has always been children's books. He lives in Chicago with his dog, Harley. Visit [alexwillan.com](http://alexwillan.com).

### **Teen Authors**

**Isabel Ibañez** was born and raised in Boca Raton by Bolivian immigrants and spent the first part of her adult life in Orlando before she and her husband moved to the Blue Ridge Mountains. She is the author of two Bolivian-inspired young adult (YA) fantasy novels, "Woven in Moonlight" and "Written in Starlight." In 2020, "Woven in Moonlight" was listed as one of TIME's 100 Best Fantasy Books of All Time. She is a contributing author in the YA Latin American speculative fiction anthology "Reclaim the Stars: 17 Tales Across Realms & Space." Visit [isabelibanez.com](http://isabelibanez.com).

**Laura Taylor Namey** is The New York Times bestselling author of Reese Witherspoon's YA Book Club pick "A Cuban Girl's Guide to Tea and Tomorrow," "The Library of Lost Things" and "When We Were Them." She is the winner of the Peggy Miller Award for excellence in young adult fiction. A proud Cuban American, she can be found hunting for vintage treasures and wishing she were in London or Paris. Visit [laurataylornamey.com](http://laurataylornamey.com).

**Jenna Evans Welch** was the kind of insatiable child reader who had no choice but to grow up to become a writer. She is The New York Times bestselling author of "Love & Gelato," "Love & Luck" and "Love & Olives." When she isn't writing girl abroad stories, Jenna can be found chasing her children or making elaborate messes in the kitchen. She lives in Salt Lake City, Utah, with her family. Visit [jennaevanswelch.com](http://jennaevanswelch.com).

**Adrienne Young** is The New York Times, USA Today and Indie bestselling author of the "Fable" duology and the "Sky in the Deep" duology. She is a foodie with a deep love of history and travel and a shameless addiction to coffee. When she's not writing, you can find her on her yoga mat, sipping wine over long dinners or disappearing into her favorite art museums. She lives with her documentary filmmaker husband and their four little wildlings in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. Visit [adrienneyoungbooks.com](http://adrienneyoungbooks.com).