



# National Writers Series

*A Year-Round Book Festival*



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2022



### NWS MISSION STATEMENT

The National Writers Series of Traverse City is a nonprofit organization dedicated to holding great conversations with today's best authors and building the creative writing skills of youth.



# WE'RE RAISING WRITERS

The year of 2022 was quite a transition year and a challenging one at that. We went from Zoom to in-person events and hired our first education manager to oversee our Raising Writers programs. I also resumed the role of executive director in June, first in an interim capacity and then permanently. It feels great to be back!



Despite the obstacles, we still hosted a terrific slate of 19 authors in 2022, including Fredrik Backman, David Sedaris, Pete Souza, Anna Quindlen, U.S. poet laureate Joy Harjo (in partnership with the Traverse Area District Library), Great Lakes authors Dave Dempsey and Jerry Dennis (in partnership with the International Affairs Forum), Paul Holes, disability activist Alice Wong (with author Stephanie Foo stepping in), and Honoree' Fanonne Jeffers, Vanessa Riley and Wanda Morris.

Transitioning back to in-person events in 2022 seemed as difficult as the dark pandemic days of 2021; authors weren't readily going on book tour and there was a palpable sense of caution as people weighed whether to mingle with large numbers of people or stay home. Our in-person audience numbers were admittedly small at first. Even today, many folks choose to watch virtually and more than a few authors ask to avoid selfies so as not to risk upending their multi-city book tours.

The upside is that we learned that hybrid events were possible and even a good thing as virtual numbers made up for the smaller in-person audiences. Using the hybrid model, author Fredrik Backman hit record book sales of 742 copies of *The Winner* and backlist titles at his September event!

The pandemic years also set the stage for a robust expansion of our Front Street Writers program with our new education manager. The hybrid model made our classes more accessible to students living in far-flung rural towns. They Zoom for three classes, for example, and meet in-person once a month. One of the greatest successes of this program is watching students gain confidence in expressing themselves and in their ability to write. Avery Taylor, for example, enrolled in our college essay writing class and was brave enough to recite her essay at Margo Price's October 2022 event at the State Theatre. We learned later that she was accepted to the University of Michigan with a sizeable scholarship! Our creative writing classes remain free to all, and are more important than ever, as many area public schools no longer offer them.

None of this would be remotely possible without our talented and hard-working staff, the leadership of the NWS board, loyal volunteers, event sponsors, and amazingly generous donors, large and small. And most importantly, we have YOU—an impressive community of book lovers who attend our events! I often hear that people from other cities and towns cannot believe the incredible authors we host in Traverse City—but I can. We live in a very special place with very special people. Thanks for making it all possible.

Warmest regards,

**ANNE STANTON**

Executive Director & Co-founder

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Author Copy: Anna Faller

Designer: Colleen Zanotti

Editor: Anne Stanton

# RAISING WRITERS PROGRAMS

The National Writers Series is committed to “raising writers” through a series of community programs, all of which are designed to help students develop their reading and writing skills. In 2022 calendar year, Raising Writers programs enrolled about 290 students ranging in age from grade-school to secondary and representing a variety of demographics from the surrounding five-county area.

## SUPPORTING PASSIONATE WRITERS through college scholarships

With the support of the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation, the National Writers Series is able to provide \$4,000 in annual college scholarships to eligible high school juniors and seniors. To date, the organization has awarded more than \$60,000 in scholarship funds to college-bound students. In 2022, recipients represented Traverse City West and Central High schools, as well as Interlochen Arts Academy.

## THE BATTLE IS ON Battle of the Books (BOTB)

Now in its eighth year, Battle of the Books is presented by the National Writers Series in partnership with the Traverse Area District Library and is a foundational element of the organization’s youth literacy efforts.

In the 2022 season, the National Writers Series welcomed 48 teams in the Tournament Division and another nine in the newly-established Faire Division, for more than 300 participating readers representing upwards of 10 different districts, organizations, and charters.

The semi-finals took place on NMC’s campus on March 5. The Championship Battle and All-Team Finale was held on March 13 at the City Opera house and featured a book presentation by award-winning author, Jack Cheng (*See You in the Cosmos*). Horizon Books was a key partner; and the season’s winning team was Readers of the Wild.

## INSIDE A WRITER’S HEAD conversations with visiting authors

Dr. Benjamin Gilmer (*The Other Dr. Gilmer*) visited Leland Public School’s AP Psychology class on September 21 to unpack the complex topics he broaches in his memoir and *This American Life* podcast (“Dr. Gilmer and Mr. Hyde”). Bestselling author and journalist, Anna Quindlen, also joined a class of about 54 students at the Career Teach Center on December 15 for a 40-minute presentation, followed by brief Q and A.

## FRONT STREET WRITERS where students write novels, non-fiction, and essays (oh my!)

Front Street Writers is a grassroots movement, by NWS co-founder Doug Stanton—inspired by his creative writing education at Interlochen Arts Academy—that aims to give area public school students a similar opportunity by offering free creative writing classes.

The initiative is largely supported by area donors, grants, and sponsors and features: monthly writing workshops (which served 19 students in 2022); author master classes led by visiting National Writers Series authors; one- to two-day intensive workshops, and a semester-long Creative Writing Lab. Students also publish their work in the annual *NWS Literary Journal*.

## AUTHOR MASTER CLASSES

Visiting authors Jack Cheng and Ellen Airgood each led an hour-long writing masterclass in March, with 31 and 14 participants, respectively. The season also featured an appearance from Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Paige St. John, as well as a journalism workshop (Traverse City Central High School) led by author, Daniel Bergner. NWS reports a total master class attendance of 57 students for the calendar year.

## 2022 NWS Scholarship Winners



**Leslie Lee**  
Nonfiction Award

**LAUREN MAY**  
Senior, TC Central  
High School



**Robert & Marcy Branski**  
Poetry Award

**ELLA RINTALA**  
Senior, TC West  
High School



**William R. Montgomery**  
Fiction Award

**MARGARET WORDEN**  
Senior, Interlochen  
Arts Academy



**Judith Lang**  
Journalism Award

**ANNA SPERRY**  
Junior, TC West  
High School

## CREATIVE WRITING LAB

Front Street Writers' creative writing cohort began in October, 2022 and finished in January, 2023. This rigorous, semester-long course is modeled after a Master of Fine Arts (MFA). It's available to high school juniors and seniors and is led by instructor, Kevin Fitton.

The year's creative writing courses ran for both spring and fall semesters, with 13 and 10 students, respectively. They represented various schools and communities, and several have read their work at live NWS events. These classes focus on "core competencies" of fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction, and students practice workshoping strategies in addition implementing instructor feedback. Fitton highlighted student growth, as well as the quality of their work, as high points.

## ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR:

Kevin Fitton holds an MFA from Bennington College and is pursuing a Ph.D. in Creative Writing from Western Michigan University. He's the author of children's picture book, *Higher Ground*, with Caldecott-winning artist, Mary Azarian; and has contributed to various publications, including *Jabberwock* and *The Saturday Evening Post*.

## BUT WAIT - THERE'S MORE! (creative writing classes, that is)

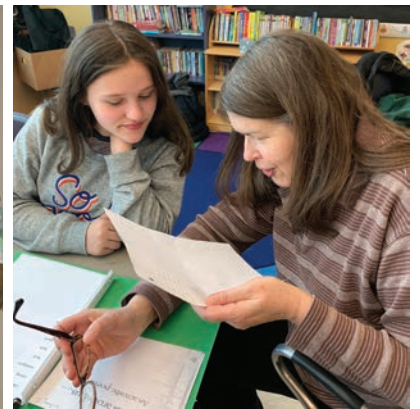
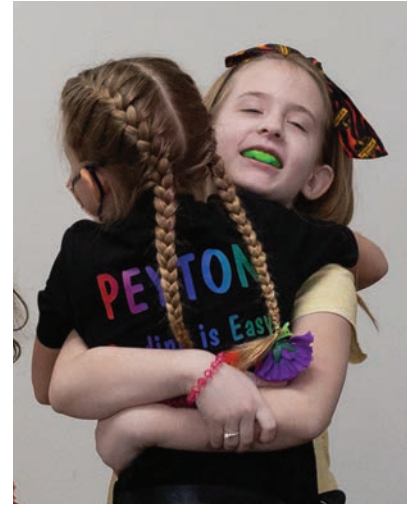
In addition to Front Street Writers' classes, NWS collaborates with local organizations (notably, Northwestern Michigan College) to offer other writing workshops. These range from fiction to essay writing, and include poetry classes at Blair and Traverse Heights Elementary Schools. In 2022, about 140 students participated in these workshops.

## NOVEL WRITING PROGRAM

The NWS/TADL NaNoWriMo Young Writers program, modeled after National Novel Writing Month ("NaNoWriMo"), ran from September, 2022 to January, 2023 and enrolled 26 students from four different schools in a challenge to hit individual word goals.

Students met weekly starting the last week of September, and through October, participated in guided workshops and interactive story-building activities. In November, they began writing their novels through group writing challenges and nightly writing "bursts."

Together, the group produced more than 261,000 words, with two students each exceeding 20,000. Reception for the program was overwhelmingly positive, with both parents and students noting creative opportunity and overall excitement as program highlights. Participants celebrated their completed pieces at a party in January, and met



with Jacque Burke to revise their works into excerpts for the 2023 *NWS Literary Journal*.

## About the Instructor:

Jacque Burke has been the volunteer municipal liaison for NaNoWriMo since 2012. She holds a Masters of Social Work in Community Organization from the University of Michigan, and has experience working with young people in both educational and clinical settings.

## COLLEGE ESSAY WRITING WORKSHOP

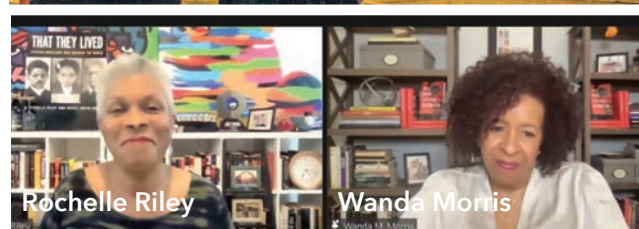
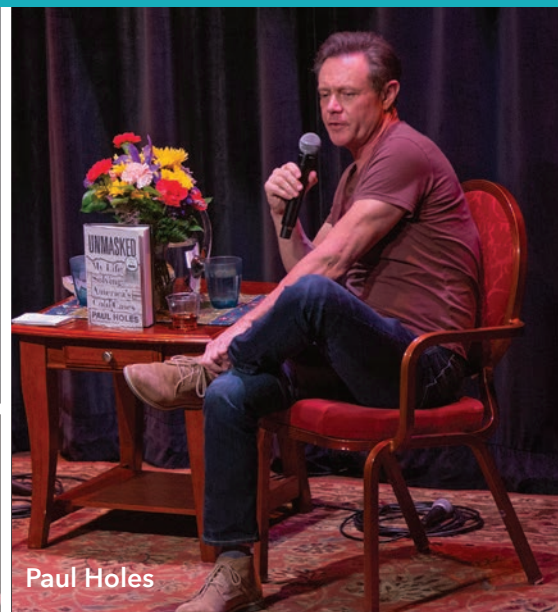
This year's College Essay Writing Workshop was led by NWS Education Director, Ari Mokdad. The course saw a record enrollment of 22 students. It began with a two-hour online class, followed by one-on-one sessions where students met with Mokdad to revise their work. Mokdad said all were eager learners, and she recommended additional class sections in the future to fulfill high demand.

## About the Instructor:

Ari Mokdad is the Education Director for the National Writers Series, as well an award-winning choreographer and writer. She holds an MA from Wayne State, and an MFA in Creative Writing from Warren Wilson College; and in 2022, was awarded a Centrum Artist Residency to begin work on her first book. She lives with her husband in Traverse City.



# HIGHLIGHTS OF AN AMAZING YEAR - JANUARY - DECEMBER 2022





## FACTS & FIGURES • RAISING WRITERS | 2022-2023

Front Street Writers  
has enrolled more than

600

students since its  
inception in 2010

NWS has awarded

\$60K

in scholarships  
to 38 students

40 Battle of the Books  
teams read a collective

320

books in 2022

140

students participated  
in NWS poetry classes

Battle of the Books  
has impacted more than

2,000

area students  
since its inception

The *NWS Literary  
Journal* has published  
eight journals  
with more than

200

student writings

## SUPPORT BY THE NUMBERS | 2022-2023

NWS has received  
more than

**\$227K**

in total donations  
in 2022

**796**

individuals donated  
\$499 or less in 2022

NWS has had  
patrons from all

**50**

U.S. states including  
Washington DC who  
have attended an event,  
ordered books, Zoomed in,  
or made donations

NWS received more than

**\$37K**

in Grants and  
Sponsorships

**104**

individuals donated  
\$500 or more in 2022



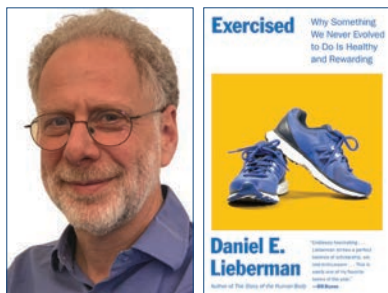
## DANIEL LIEBERMAN January 21 - Virtual

Daniel E. Lieberman is the national bestselling author of *The Story of the Human Body: Evolution, Health, and Disease*. He is also the Edwin M. Lerner Professor of Biological Sciences and Human Evolutionary Biology at Harvard.

His second book, ***Exercised: Why Something We Never Evolved to Do Is Healthy and Rewarding***, which Bill Bryson calls a “perfect balance of scholarship and wit [...]” draws on Lieberman’s own leading research to explain the origins of our physical activity, while busting modern exercise myths and offering readers constructive suggestions on how to improve their overall health.

Guest hosts for the evening were Lisa Taylor (Executive Director of the TCTC) and specialized pharmacist, Michael Tiberg. Virtual guests most enjoyed Lieberman’s “candid comments and responses to questions,” as well as the participants’ overall enthusiasm.

**NUMBERS:** 209 virtual attendees • 55 books sold



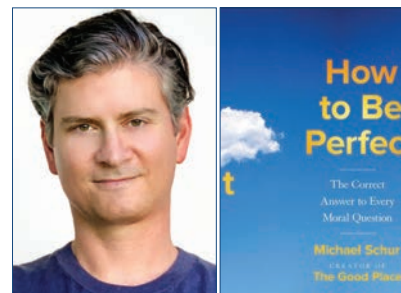
## MICHAEL SCHUR February 4 - Virtual

Television writer and producer (and Michigan native!) Michael Schur, has worked on such popular television series as *The Office* and *Master of None*, and is the creator or co-creator of *The Good Place*, *Parks and Recreation*, and *Brooklyn 99*.

His debut book - a propulsive and easily-digestible guide to ethical living, titled ***How to Be Perfect*** - was inspired by his experiences creating *The Good Place*, and takes a deep dive into complex practices like Ubuntu and Deontology, while unpacking moral and philosophical concepts going back to the time of Aristotle (oh, and it’s hilarious, to boot).

Guest host for the event was actor and Interlochen alum, Ed Helms (most notably, of *The Office*, and *The Hangover* trilogy). Attendees loved the “comfortable banter” and respect between Schur and Helms, as well as the pair’s varied and relatable presentation of theoretical concepts.

**NUMBERS:** 315 attendees / 66 books sold



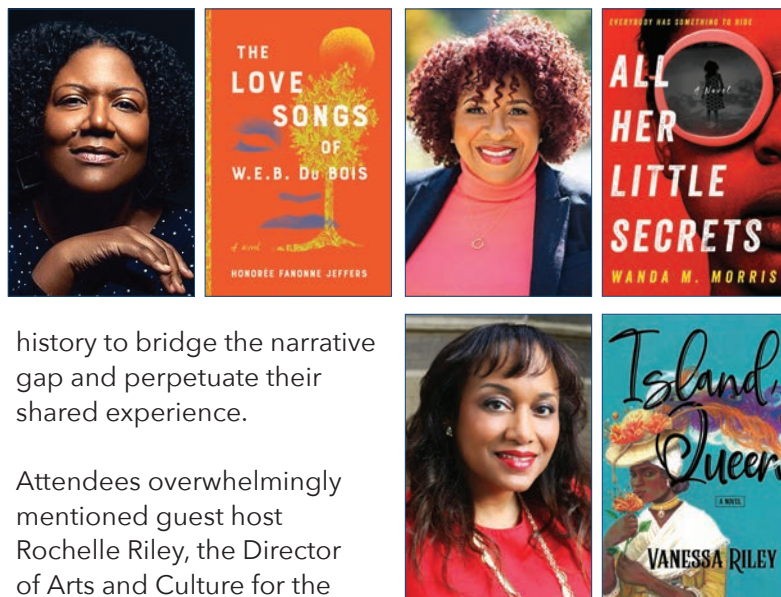
## BLACK HISTORY MONTH PANEL February 24 - Virtual

Poet, essayist, and author, Honorée Fanonne Jeffers is the acclaimed author of five books of poetry, as well the bestselling novel (featured), ***The Love Songs of W.E.B. Du Bois***. She is a 2020 inductee to the Alabama Writers’ Hall of Fame.

Wanda M. Morris is the acclaimed author of debut novel, ***All Her Little Secrets***; as well as an accomplished attorney and founder of female empowerment program, Women’s Initiative.

Award-winning writer Vanessa Riley is the author of over 20 titles, including “Good Morning America” Buzz Pick, ***Island Queen***. Her historical novels showcase women of color and have received starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly* and *Booklist*.

Together, this powerhouse author trifecta took on hundreds of years (and more than three genres) of Black



history to bridge the narrative gap and perpetuate their shared experience.

Attendees overwhelmingly mentioned guest host Rochelle Riley, the Director of Arts and Culture for the City of Detroit, as a highlight - calling her moderation “simply the best” - as well as the authors’ mutual connection and willingness to share their inspirations and writing process.

**NUMBERS:** 159 attendees / 47 books sold

# NWS AUTHOR LINEUP | JANUARY - DECEMBER 2022

## JACK CHENG: BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

March 13 - Live

**B**attle of the Books celebrated its seventh season in 2022, with a triumphant return to in-person festivities after spending the previous year online. The competition kicked off on March 5 for head-to-head "battles" and team events for the new Faire Division.

Acclaimed author, Jack Cheng, joined the National Writers Series for the Championship Battle and All Team Finale of Battle of the Books Grand Traverse, where he honored the winning teams and gave a special book presentation (open to the public). Cheng also led a free virtual master class for young writers on the evening of Wednesday, March 16.

Now based in Detroit, Shanghai-born Cheng is the brains behind tech-minded fiction for audiences of all ages. His debut children's novel, *See You in the Cosmos*, won the



2017 Golden Kite and Great Lakes, Great Reads Awards for Best Middle Grade Fiction. He's visited schools around the world to help students discover their paths as artists and storytellers. Cheng is also a 2019 Kresge Artist Fellow and a co-host of the children's literature podcast, BookSmitten.

**NUMBERS:** 321 participating readers



## ELLEN AIRGOOD

March 24 - Hybrid

**P**rize-winning Michigan author, Ellen Airgood, is a University of Michigan graduate and has worked in both air quality control and hospitality in addition to her writing career. Airgood's novels include *South of Superior* (a Michigan Notable Book Award winner), as well as the acclaimed middle-grade novels, *Prairie Evers* and *The Education of Ivy Blake*.

Her newest novel, *Tin Camp Road* - called "moving and brave" by *People Magazine* - is both a U.P. and Michigan Notable Book Award winner, and follows protagonists Laurel and Skye Hill in their plight for survival - and for each other - after an unexpected turn threatens the fragile life they've built.

Guest host for the event was local journalist and educator, Susan Odgers. Attendees highlighted the pair's rapport, as well as Airgood's candid responses, as high points.

**NUMBERS:** 327 attendees (159 virtual) / 76 books sold



## BRAD MELTZER

April 7 - Virtual

**B**rad Meltzer is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of more than ten thrillers, including *The Inner Circle* and *The Book of Fate*. He is also an accomplished media personality and host of *History Channel* installments *Brad Meltzer's Decoded* and *Brad Meltzer's Lost History*.

His featured book, *The Lightning Rod* - which bestselling author, Lee Child, calls "unputdownable" - reprises beloved protagonists, Zig and Nola. In it, readers follow Archie Mint, whose untimely death sends mortician, "Zig" Zigarowski back into the path of sergeant Nola Brown - and a classified group so dangerous, it could jeopardize the future of the country.

This virtual event featured guest host and bestselling author, John Searles. The discussion highlighted Meltzer's real-life influences, and attendees thought he was "relaxed and charming."

**NUMBERS:** 95 attendees / 24 books sold

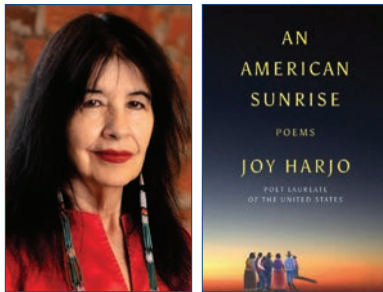




## JOY HARJO

April 19 - Hybrid

2<sup>nd</sup> 3rd Poet Laureate and writer of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Joy Harjo is the author of ten poetry collections, including the highly-acclaimed *Weaving Sundown in a Scarlet Light: Fifty Poems for Fifty Years*. Her countless accolades include Yale's 2023 Bollingen Prize for American Poetry and the Poetry Foundation's Ruth Lilly Prize for Lifetime Achievement.



In her showcased book, *An American Sunrise* (2019), Harjo focuses on the forced removal of the Creek people from their original lands. In it, readers glimpse her personal life through poems that speak to an unjust history in order to make space for healing. *Los Angeles Review of Books* calls Harjo one of its "finest and most complicated poets."

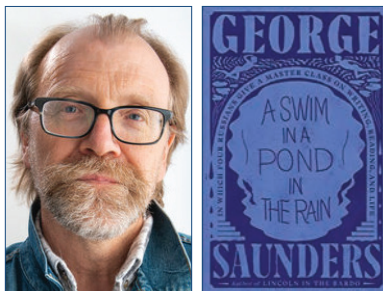
The event featured guest host, Holly T. Bird, the first Native arbitrator in the U.S. Guests called Harjo "an inspiration" and highlighted her "generosity of spirits and wondrous insights."

**NUMBERS:** 579 attendees (455 virtual) / 198 books sold

## GEORGE SAUNDERS

May 5 - Virtual

George Saunders is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of 12 books, including Man Booker Prize-winner, *Lincoln and the Bardo* and National Book Award finalist, *Tenth of December*. He also teaches in Syracuse University's Creative Writing MFA program.



His featured book, *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain*, was inspired by that very class; and pairs the writings of four Russian greats (including Tolstoy and Chekhov, among others) with seven of Saunders' own essays to explore how storytelling works and its importance in forging human connection. Oprah Daily calls the book a "worship song to writers and readers."

Guest host for the event was local writer and NWS Creative Writing Labs instructor, Kevin Fitton. Guests thought Saunders was "phenomenal," and noted his writing process and insights as high points.

**NUMBERS:** 247 attendees / 47 books sold

## NWS EVENTS ARE AWESOME!

"The author's articulate nature, his honesty, and attitudes about teaching. This was a great talk!"

Audience response  
**GEORGE SAUNDERS EVENT**

"Ellen(Airgood) and Susan (Odgers) were so relaxed, unassuming and honest. I wanted to read the book. I also enjoyed being comfortable at home without the distractions of an audience. Afterwards, I excitedly called a friend whom I knew was watching and we had a good discussion. I then checked out other NWS YouTube's and will watch them. Thank you!"

Audience response  
**ELLEN AIRGOOD EVENT**

"The easy flowing conversation and casual atmosphere. I felt as if I was at a dinner party with Mr. Holes and he was just talking with me. Very engaging."

Audience response  
**PAUL HOLES EVENT**

"Every word of it. Joy Harjo was awesome. She shared wondrous insights and experiences. I felt her generosity of spirit. The interviewer was perfect, in my opinion. I learned much from her. I was strengthened by both women's ability to find and embrace joy in the midst of the reality of life's challenges and suffering. Thank you for this remarkable opportunity."

Audience response  
**JOY HARJO, U.S. POET LAUREATE EVENT**

## PAUL HOLES

May 10 - Hybrid

Before retiring in 2018, cold-case investigator Paul Holes had spent nearly three decades in California's Bay Area. His specialization in serial-predators saw him in both the crime lab and D.A.'s office, where he worked on such nationally-broadcast cases as Laci Peterson's murder and the identification of the Golden State Killer.

In his debut memoir, ***Unmasked: My Life Solving America's Cold Cases***, Holes brings readers behind the crime tape, offering a first-hand glimpse into some of the country's most complex cases - and the mind of the man committed to solving them.

Guest host was Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and podcast host, Paige St. John. Attendees' comments called Holes "engaging and fascinating," and many appreciated the up-close perspective on "events [they'd] heard about on the news."

**NUMBERS:** 310 attendees (95 virtual) / 81 books sold



## DANIEL BERGNER

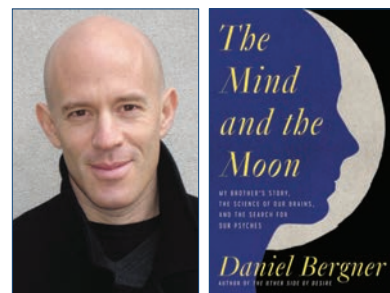
June 2 - Hybrid

Author and journalist, Daniel Bergner, is a contributing writer for *The New York Times Magazine* and the author of six nonfiction books; including *New York Times* bestseller, *Sing for Your Life*. His work has also appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Atlantic*, and *Mother Jones*, among others, and is included in *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Nonfiction*.

Inspired by his brother's bipolar diagnosis, Bergner's book, ***The Mind and the Moon*** - which the NYT Book Review calls "essential [...] reporting" - investigates the pharmaceutical industry's impact on how we approach psychiatric treatment and raises important questions about our perception of mental health.

Guest host was media personality and Executive Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Rick Coates.

**NUMBERS:** 223 attendees (83 virtual) / 42 books sold



## KUDOS TO NWS



"When you put together a community that cared deeply about reading and a staff that cares deeply about writers, magic happens. The National Writers Series was one of the highlights of my last book tour."

**-Jodi Picoult**

## ANGIE MORGAN

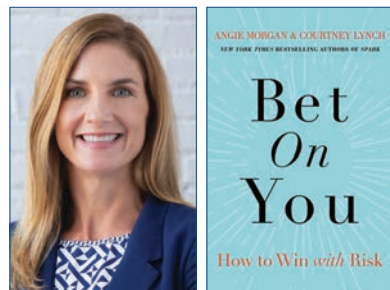
June 16 - Hybrid

Angie Morgan is the *New York Times* best-selling author of *SPARK* and *Leading from the Front*, as well as a successful entrepreneur and highly-sought-after leadership coach. She's a University of Michigan graduate and one of only 1,000 women managers in her prior Marine Corps outfit.

Her latest book, ***Bet on You: How to Win with Risk***, has been backed by some of the globe's most successful business (including Google, Oracle, and FedEx), and works to define the concept of risk, while providing proven strategies for readers to manipulate risk in their own lives - and reap the highest possible reward.

Guest host for the night was The Hagerty Group's Chief Operating Officer and previous national consumer lender, Collette (Coco) Champagne. Attendees loved Morgan's "animated" and "genuine" dynamic, and many reported leaving the event with a feeling of inspiration.

**NUMBERS:** 237 attendees (49 virtual) / 74 books sold



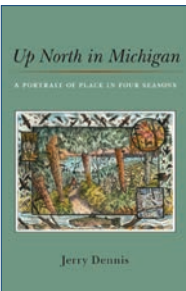
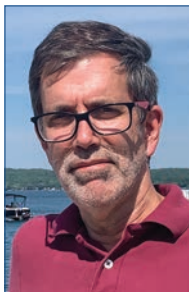


# NWS AUTHOR LINEUP | JANUARY - DECEMBER 2022

## JERRY DENNIS & DAVE DEMPSEY

August 25 - Hybrid

Dave Dempsey has authored or contributed to six books on conservation and has driven Great Lakes policy change for more than three decades. He is a policy advisor for the nonprofit FLOW, and is a 2009 recipient of the Michigan Author Award. His 2021 update of *Great Lakes for Sale* (2008) takes an in-depth look at water-diversion, including the ever-increasing threat of commodifying Great Lakes resources.



Together, this Michigan author duo tackled the growing threats our Great Lakes face and the steps we can take to protect their resources. Guest host for the event was longtime environmental and climate journalist, Sherri McWhirter.

**NUMBERS:** 581 attendees (185 virtual) / 152 books sold



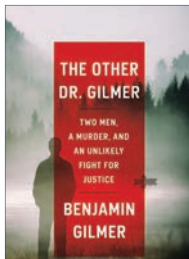
Acclaimed nature writer, Jerry Dennis's work has appeared in over 100 publications, including *The New York Times* and the *Smithsonian*. He is a Michigan Author of the Year Award recipient and a co-founder of Big Maple Press. In his featured essay collection, *Up North in Michigan*, Dennis explores the region's changing landscape, from seasons to subdivisions and beyond.



## DR. BENJAMIN GILMER

September 21 - Hybrid

Family physician and academic doctor, Benjamin Gilmer is Associate Professor at the University of North Carolina's School of Medicine and the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC). He also runs MAHEC's Rural Health Initiative, which offers pipeline training for rural medical students. His honors include an Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, and he's worked extensively with global populations in both West Africa and South America.



project (courtesy of Concordia Films) is already underway.

Guest presenter for the event was award-winning broadcast journalist and host of Michigan Radio's Stateside talk show, April Baer.

**NUMBERS:** 232 attendees (68 virtual) / 66 books sold

In his debut book, *The Other Dr. Gilmer*—based on a 2013 episode of *This American Life* ("Dr. Gilmer and Mr. Hyde"), which has since amassed more than 20 million listeners—he investigates the cataclysm of events that pushed one small-town doctor to murder, and the decade-long quest for justice it generated. *The New York Times Book Review* calls the memoir "maddening and compelling," and a feature film





## FREDRIK BACKMAN

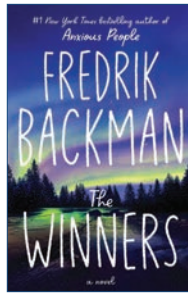
September 29 - Hybrid

**F**redrik Backman - whose popularity has been compared to ABBA and Stieg Larsson by *The New York Times Book Review* - is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *A Man Called Ove* and *Anxious People*; as well as five other novels, two novellas, and a work of nonfiction. His books have been published in more than 40 countries, and he lives with his family in Stockholm, Sweden.

His featured novel, *The Winners*, provides a long-awaited end to the *Beartown* series (which inspired the HBO offshoot of the same name), wherein the residents of a small hockey town struggle to break free of the past while bracing for an uncertain future.

Virtual and in-person attendees loved Backman's signature "dry sense of humor," and emphasized his insight and discussion of his writing process. Guest host for the event was National Writers Series co-founder and #1 *New York Times* bestselling author (*In Harm's Way*, *12 Strong*), Doug Stanton.

**NUMBERS:** 749 attendees (303 virtual) / 742 books sold



## MARGO PRICE

October 20 - Hybrid

**T**here's not much that Nashville-based singer-songwriter, Margo Price, hasn't done. A native of the rural Midwest, Price got her start in country music playing dingy pubs and busking for change. Since then, she's released four studio albums - two of which hit Billboard's country charts - performed on SNL, and even received a Grammy nomination for Best New Artist in 2019. In 2021, Price became the first woman elected to the board of Farm Aid.

Her debut memoir, *Maybe We'll Make It* - which, according to Willie Nelson, "hits you right in the gut and the heart" - Follows Price for more than a decade in her plight to make it in country music. From the highs of sold-out crowds to the music scene's hidden underbelly, Price's story is one of determination, sorrow, and ultimately, finding yourself.

Guest host for the event was (former) NWS Communications Manager and accomplished writer, Karl Klockars.

**NUMBERS:** 150 attendees (35 virtual) / 65 books sold



## DAVID SEDARIS

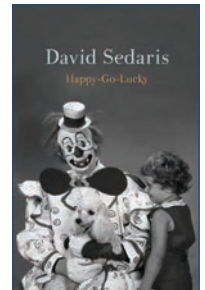
October 30 - Live

**S**atire-master, David Sedaris, is the bestselling author of *Calypso*, *When You Are Engulfed in Flames*, and *Me Talk Pretty One Day*, among countless others.

Along with his sister Amy, he's also co-written half-a-dozen plays, and is the editor of *Children Playing Before a Statue of Hercules: An Anthology of Outstanding Stories*. Sedaris is a regular contributor to *The New Yorker* and *BBC Radio 4*. His books have been translated into 25 different languages, of which 10 million are in print.

After more than a decade away from the National Writers Series, Sedaris - hailed a "champion storyteller" by the *L.A. Times* - returned to the City Opera House to present his newest essay collection, *Happy-Go-Lucky*. In it, he uses his signature wit to capture the hilarious and meaningful truths of a world ever- altered by the pandemic (from business closures to political conflict), and - rather unexpectedly - a few changes of his own.

**NUMBERS:** 668 attendees / 221 books sold





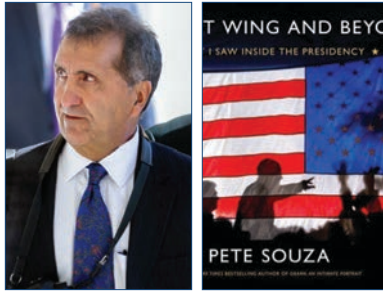
## PETE SOUZA December 1 - Hybrid

With more than 25,000 hours under his belt, former presidential photographer and bestselling author, Pete Souza, has spent more time in the Oval Office than any person in history. A professional photographer since the '70's, Souza has served as the Washington Photographer for the *Chicago Sun Times*, and was an official White House Photographer during both the Reagan and Obama administrations. He is the author of several *New York Times* bestsellers, including *Obama: An Intimate Portrait* and *Shade*.

In his newest book, *The West Wing and Beyond: What I Saw Inside the Presidency*, Souza takes readers behind the scenes of the American presidency, sharing rarely-seen photographs and firsthand stories of life and traveling with the president.

Attendees named the accompanying photo presentation and Souza's singular insight, as well as his vivid storytelling, as high points of the event.

**NUMBERS:** 516 attendees (86 virtual)/ 305 books sold



## STEPHANIE FOO for ALICE WONG December 8 - Virtual

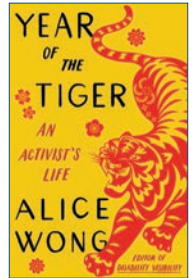
Alice Wong is a disabled author and activist; and is the founder and director of the Disability Visibility Project - an online community committed to amplifying and celebrating disabled voices. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Radiolab*, and *Teen Vogue*, among others.

Wong's debut memoir, *Year of the Tiger*, combines her previous publications with a selection of mixed media to both accelerate - and celebrate - the continued fight for disability activism.

Stephanie Foo is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *What My Bones Know: A Memoir of Healing from Complex Trauma*. Her work has appeared in *Vox*, *The New York Times*, and *This American Life* and *Snap Judgement*.

Guest host was local journalist and educator, Susan Odgers. Attendees loved Odgers' "excellent" moderation, as well as Foo's singular perspective on the topic of disability.

**NUMBERS:** 86 attendees / 32 (total) books sold



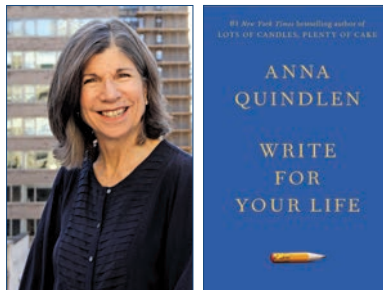
## ANNA QUINDLEN December 13 - Hybrid

Returning National Writers Series author, Anna Quindlen, who the *Detroit Free Press* calls "compassionate, witty, and wise," is an accomplished writer and journalist. She's the brains behind several novels and the *New York Times* bestselling memoir, *Lots of Candles, Plenty of Cake* (2012). Her book, *A Short Guide to a Happy Life*, has sold more than a million copies, and she was the recipient of a Pulitzer Prize (1992) for her *New York Times* commentary.

Her featured book, *Write for Your Life*, is an oh-so-sweet call for readers to take up the pen. In it, she uses her own experience, paired with examples from the past, to encourage writing as an essential tool for connection to ourselves and to others.

Virtual and in-person attendees loved the warmth and "realness" of Quindlen's answers, as well as the many life lessons she shared. Guest host for the event was prizewinning author and poet, Anne-Marie Oomen.

**NUMBERS:** 462 attendees (142 virtual) / 403 books sold



## KUDOS TO NWS



"This program is **FANTASTIC**. What you're supporting here is the future of our children, and it's important work."

~ Mitch Albom



## National Writers Series

*A Year-Round Book Festival*



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