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Ohio River Festival of Books Celebrates Joy of Reading

Mystery writer Lisa Scottoline, award-winning Southern writer Sharyn McCrumb and nationally acclaimed biographer Jean Edward Smith headline a list of 70 authors who will take part in the fourth Ohio River Festival of Books, March 7-8, at the Big Sandy Superstore Arena Conference Center in Huntington.

Authors taking part in the festival will discuss, read from and sign their books. The event also will offer panel discussions and other programs for readers of all tastes, booths staffed by booksellers and other vendors, children's entertainment and much more.

A lawyer turned mystery writer, Scottoline has written a dozen bestsellers and has been honored with an Edgar Award, the most prestigious prize any mystery writer can win. She will speak and sign copies of her newest book, "Lady Killer, at the Festival's opening event, a reception at 6 p.m. Friday, March 7. The reception also will feature music by the '37 Flood. Admission is free. However, tickets are required. They may be obtained by visiting or calling the Cabell County Library at (304) 528-5700.

Other than the opening reception, all other Festival events are scheduled Saturday.

McCrumb, who will speak at 10 a.m., was best known for her series of Appalachian Ballad novels until a new-found interest in NASCAR prompted her to write "St. Dale," a modern-day reworking of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales." Now she's followed that with "Once Around the Track," another novel with a NASCAR setting.

Smith, the John Marshall Professor of Political Science at Marshall University, is the author of a dozen books, including acclaimed biographies of Ulysses S. Grant, Chief Justice John Marshall and Gen. Lucius D. Clay. He will discuss his latest book, "FDR," a biography of Franklin Roosevelt, at 2:45 p.m.

In conjunction with the WSAZ Home and Garden Show, set for the same Saturday in the adjacent Big Sandy Superstore Arena, the Festival has scheduled two noted gardening experts.

Jon Carloftis grew up in Kentucky, where he began a love affair with nature that has culminated in his being recognized as one of the nation's premier gardening experts. He will speak at 2:45 p.m.

Denise Wiles Adams will speak at 1:30 p.m. on "Restoring American Gardens: Ornamental Plans and Landscapes, 1770-1920."

Budding authors won't want to miss a 1:30 p.m. presentation on "Book Publishing and Agents" by Michelle Rubin, a senior agent with Writers House.

Gordon Simmons, Chris Hatton and David Owens have a combined 50 years of bookselling experience and will share that expertise at a 2:45 p.m. panel discussion of how to identify valuable books. (They will not offer appraisals.)

The MadCap Puppets will perform at 10 a.m., offering guaranteed laughter for children of all ages.

Other Festival participants and programs include:

10 a.m. – Joe Geiger and Jack Dickinson, "Researching the Civil War in Your Backyard."

10 a.m. – Poets Laura Treacy Bentley, Mark DeFoe and John McKernan.

10 a.m. – Award-winning columnist Dave Lieber grew up in Manhattan and now lives in Texas but says the years he spent as a reporter for the Charleston Gazette in the early 1980s were the most important and formative years of his life. "West Virginians changed me and helped me become a better person."

11:30 a.m. – Ken and Melanie Light, "Coal Hollow: Images and Words from Southern West Virginia."

11:30 a.m. – Michelangelo Altieri, "Most Sincerely Yours: A Look at Letters in Fiction Yesterday and Today."

11:30 a.m. – Princeton native Kevin Stewart, a professor of English and creative writing at Potomac State College and the author of "The Way Things Always Happen Here."

11:30 a.m. and again at 2:45 p.m. – Librarian-turned-author Shutta Crum. Born in Paintsville, Ky., she's written a number of award-winning books for children and young adults, including "Spitting Image," which is on the New York Public Library's list of Top 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing.

11:30 a.m. – Mary Alice Mairose, curator at the Ohio Governor's Residence and the editor of "Our First Family's Home."

1:30 p.m. – “Poetry Alive,” a high-intensity poetry performance aimed at young audiences.

1:30 p.m. – Allen Loughry, author of “Don’t Buy Another Vote, I Won’t Pay for Your Landslide: The Sordid and Continuing History of Political Corruption in West Virginia.”

1:30 p.m. – Debbi Dadey in Lexington, Ky. Is author and co-author of more than 140 children’s books. She grew up along the Ohio River and taught elementary school in Lexington, Ky.

2:45 p.m. – Chris Green, editor of “Coal: A Poetry Anthology,” will talk about compiling the anthology and the contributing poets will read from their work.

The Ohio River Festival of Books is a joint undertaking of several local libraries. These include the Cabell County Public Library, Marshall University Libraries, Briggs Lawrence County Public Library, Wayne County Public Library and Ohio University Southern Campus Library.

Border’s Books, Music & Café at the Huntington Mall is the Festival’s prime vendor and a sponsor.

Other Festival sponsors include the West Virginia Humanities Council, the Center for the Book, the Huntington Foundation, the Friends of the Library, the Cabell County Commission, the Pilot Club of Huntington, The Herald-Dispatch, Marathon Petroleum, Huntington Business College and the Mansbach Foundation.

The Festival is a fund of the Foundation for the Tri-State Community.

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