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**Exciting author lineup planned for 2026 Southwest Florida Reading Festival**

Fort Myers, FL, Dec. 10, 2025 – Lee County Library System will welcome more than two dozen authors to its 27th annual Southwest Florida Reading Festival on Saturday, March 7, 2026. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. readers of all ages can meet their favorite writers, hear behind-the-scenes stories and get books signed at this free, outdoor community event hosted at the Fort Myers Regional Library, 2450 First St., Fort Myers.

Drawing thousands each year, the event features author presentations, book signings and interactive activities for all ages. Attendees also can enjoy library technology demonstrations, local author showcases, storytelling, arts and crafts, youth writing awards, festival merchandise and a variety of food vendors.

The festival, created to celebrate the power of reading and to promote literacy and library services, inspires readers of all ages by introducing them to nationally acclaimed best-selling authors.

"I have been a part of this festival since the very first event and I love how it continues to grow and change to reach our community in new ways," Library Director Mindi Simon said.

This year's lineup features Wally Lamb and Brad Thor along with other stellar authors including Sarah Pekkanen, Kristen Harmel and Lisa Wingate. Featured youth creators are Dan Gutman, creator of the "Rappy the Raptor" and "My Weird School" series plus husband-and-wife creators Trisha Speed Shaskan and Stephen Shaskan.

The full list of this year's authors is available on the latest version of the festival's mobile app "SWFL Read Fest" or the festival website, [ReadFest.org](http://ReadFest.org). Fans of the festival can also visit the website to sign up for the festival's monthly email newsletter.

An Evening with the Authors, the reading festival's featured fundraiser, takes place Friday, March 6, and offers a one-of-a-kind chance to meet and mingle with the authors as part of an unforgettable dining experience at the Burroughs Home and Gardens. The evening also includes a silent auction with proceeds supporting the festival and giving guests the chance to snag interesting items and experiences like island getaways, theme park tickets and more. Tickets are available now at [ReadFest.org](http://ReadFest.org).

The Southwest Florida Reading Festival proudly provides a free book to each child and teen in attendance as well. Funding for this program is made possible by a charitable gift of \$10,000 from festival sponsor Suncoast Credit Union Foundation. Suncoast Credit Union founded the Suncoast Credit Union Foundation to promote the education, health and emotional well-being of children in the community.

"Each time a Suncoast member uses their debit or credit card, the credit union donates four cents to fund local initiatives. Since 1990, the Foundation has raised and donated more than \$55 million, and we cannot imagine a better use of funds than a festival that celebrates the joy and importance of reading," said Jeff Kunberger, executive director of Foundations for Suncoast.

Festival Coordinator Melissa Baker said, "The library is grateful for the funding from Suncoast, which supports literacy in the community and helps to instill a love of reading among our youngest attendees."

The Southwest Florida Reading Festival is free and community-supported through donations, sponsorships and grants. Individuals can support the Festival through the Adopt an Author fundraiser,

which helps cover event costs and offers giving opportunities starting at just \$25, each with a range of fun incentives, or they may simply make a secure online donation.

Funding for this program also is provided in part through a grant from Florida Humanities with funds from the Jacarlene Foundation. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of Florida Humanities or the Jacarlene Foundation.

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