



Thursday, Oct. 24, 2024

WHAT TO EXPECT AS WE OPEN THE PAGES OF THE 2024 LOUISIANA BOOK FESTIVAL

BATON ROUGE, La. — The 20th [Louisiana Book Festival](#) is set for **Saturday, November 2, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.** in downtown Baton Rouge's Capitol Park with events in the State Capitol, State Library of Louisiana, Capitol Park Museum, and along neighboring streets. More than 200 authors and presenters, ranging from award winners to authors making their debut, will talk about their books during panel discussions and programs, followed by book signings.

“This year is a big anniversary for the Louisiana Book Festival, and the organizers have outdone themselves again,” said Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser. “Tens of thousands of people come to the festival every year because of the reputation it’s developed over the last two decades. I expect another large crowd.”

“If we get any complaints about the festival, it’s that we have too many interesting programs happening at the same time,” said Jim Davis, Louisiana Book Festival Executive Director. “We work hard to put together a good lineup that celebrates Louisiana authors and those on a bigger, national stage. I’m excited for this year’s edition of the festival, especially since it’s our 20th anniversary.”

A highlight of the day is the presentation of the Louisiana Writer Award (LWA), given this year to poet and Baton Rouge-area native [David Kirby](#) at the opening ceremony. Past LWA recipients [David Armand](#), [Darrell Bourque](#), [James Lee Burke](#), [Johnette Downing](#), [William Joyce](#), [Valerie Martin](#), [Maurice Carlos Ruffin](#), and [Sheryl St. Germain](#) will also participate in the festival.

Other highlights this year include:

- A program featuring beloved Saints safety [Steve Gleason](#) and [Jeff Duncan](#), a *Times-Picayune* and *Advocate* sports columnist, discussing their book, *A Life Impossible*, which chronicles Gleason’s life with ALS.

- Panels featuring short stories, humor writing, memoirs, detective stories, poetry, young adult books, Louisiana history, and more.
- A [public library roundup](#) featuring bookmobiles and public libraries from around Louisiana.
- A discussion with [James Lee Burke](#), who will appear live via a video feed, and [Andre Dubus III](#), who will lead the talk in person.
- Special guests [Guy Lamolinara](#), head of the Library of Congress Center for the Book, of which the Louisiana Center for the Book is an affiliate, and directors of Centers for the Book from Arkansas ([Karen O'Connell](#)), Missouri ([Lisa Carrico](#)), Tennessee ([Patrick Shaffner](#)), Texas ([Michele Chan Santos](#)), and Virginia ([Kalela Williams](#), also with a featured young adult novel) who share great reads from each of their states, a sort of readers advisory.
- [Cooking demonstrations](#) with cookbook authors.
- The debut of excerpts from *Books Across America: A Road Trip Documentary*, which features [Mason Engel](#), the literary traveler who in 50 days traveled to all 50 states and read 50 books by the 50 authors he interviewed; he is joined by two authors featured in the film, [GennaRose Nethercott](#) (Vermont) and [Maurice Carlos Ruffin](#) (Louisiana), who will each appear in additional book festival programs featuring their latest books.
- A screening of a portion of *Literary New Orleans*, a documentary from WYES-TV that takes an up-close look at the written word in the Crescent City during the last three centuries with [Peggy Scott Laborde](#), [Dominic Massa](#), and [Maurice Carlos Ruffin](#).
- A discussion on PBS Books with its director, [Heather-Marie Montilla](#), led by [Karen LeBlanc](#), anchor of Louisiana Public Broadcasting's *Louisiana: The State We're In*.
- A full day of poetry includes two panels featuring 11 Louisiana poets hosted by Louisiana Poet Laureate [Alison Pelegrin](#), the five 2024 National Student Poets for an unprecedented third year in a row, and an additional 16 contributors to *The Poetry Buffet*.
- Editors [Suzanne Hudson](#) and [Joe Formichella](#) host *Best of the Shortest: A Southern Writers Reading Reunion* with several contributors, including Louisianans [Beverly Mashall](#) and [Dayne Sherman](#) who introduce debut their new novels as well in a separate program.

- Additional authors with books launching at the festival include [William Joyce](#) with *Rocket Puppies* and [Ken Wells](#) with an updated *Gumbo Life: A Journey Down the Roux Bayou* with a secret ingredient now revealed.
- Celebrating 60 years since The Beatles appeared in New Orleans’s City Park on September 16, 1964, internationally recognized Beatles expert, [Bruce Spizer](#) of Kenner, presents two books which tell the full story of the records and events that fueled the first phase of Beatlemania.
- [Diana B. Carlin](#), [Anita McBride](#), and [Nancy Kegan Smith](#) present *Remembering the First Ladies: The Legacies of American’s History-Making Women*. [Rebecca Boggs Roberts](#) focuses on one in particular with *Untold Power: The Fascinating Rise and Complex Legacy of First Lady Edith Wilson*. Rebecca is the daughter of noted journalists Cokie and Steve Roberts, who participated in the Louisiana Book Festival several times.
- [Robert Gwaltney](#) and [Jeffrey Dale Lofton](#) of the podcast *Inside Voices* will record “elevator pitches” by participating festival authors for a future episode. Festival attendees can listen in.
- The festival celebrates the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities Book of the Year, *The Great Power of Small Nations: Indigenous Diplomacy in the Gulf South*, with author [Elizabeth N. Ellis](#).
- It’s the season: *The Cicada Tree* by [Robert Gwaltney](#) and *When Cicadas Cry* by [Caroline Cleveland](#).
- We’ll also have the last Cadillac that Gov. Jimmy Davis owned.

A [full schedule](#) is available on the book festival’s website. Learn about more authors and featured books on the [featured participants webpage](#) and the [featured books webpage](#).

All featured titles will be available for purchase in the book tent run by Cavalier House Books of Denham Springs. T-shirts, mugs, pins, stickers, magnets, and more featuring the festival artwork will be on sale.

The 2024 Louisiana Book Festival will include the Young Readers Pavilion and Teen HQ with activities and award-winning authors. There will also be food vendors and a wide variety of book-related activities and [exhibitors](#).

For complete details on the 2024 Louisiana Book Festival and a schedule of events, visit LouisianaBookFestival.org and follow us on the [Louisiana Book Festival Facebook page](#).

The [Louisiana Center for the Book](#) was established in the State Library of Louisiana in 1994. Its mission is to stimulate public interest in reading, books, literacy, and libraries and to celebrate Louisiana's rich literary heritage. It is the official state affiliate of the Library of Congress Center for the Book.



Contact Information:

Danny Monteverde
State Library of Louisiana
225-342-4930
dmonteverde@library.la.gov

Barry Landry
Office of the Lieutenant Governor
225-342-7009
blandry@crt.la.gov