Twenty Years of Building Community, One Book at a Time

"With no hesitation and with great respect, I salute Deschutes County's community read program as the state's finest. A Novel Idea was the highpoint for me after a solid year of speaking engagements across Oregon."
—Lauren Kessler, 2009, *Stubborn Twig*

**When the A Novel Idea community read program first started 20 years ago, it was with a simple question in mind: What would happen if everyone in Deschutes County read the same book? The goal was to engage with the community through thought-provoking and relevant programming and wrap it all up with a free and accessible visit from the author. That first year, a small committee of five readers looked for a book with regional roots and selected David James Duncan's *The River Why*. The weeklong A Novel Idea event coincided with National Library Week and ended with a capstone presentation by Duncan; 400 people took part in seven programs.

Fast forward to 2019, the last year pre-pandemic, and A Novel Idea had evolved into a month-long event, with 23 programs drawing in more than 7,500 participants. When we had to make a quick pivot to online-only programming in 2020, more than 9,000 people took part in virtual programs and presentations.

The tremendous growth of A Novel Idea is a testament to you, the readers and thinkers of Deschutes County. Your interest and your enthusiasm have enriched A Novel Idea year after year, and for those of you able to provide financial support, your donations have helped ensure that every A Novel Idea program could be offered free of charge, including every author presentation.

As we came to the end of our second decade of A Novel Idea, we knew a celebration was in order. Over the years we have been around the world together—we've even been to the moon—and have visited times that stretch into the past as well as into the future. Picking just one book to mark this tremendous milestone was a daunting task. We began to consider the possibility of bringing back authors from past years, and to our delight, David James Duncan, María Amparo Escandón, Peter Heller, and Anne Griffin all said yes. We are excited and honored to bring all four authors to Central Oregon in April for the main event, and to offer you more than two dozen engaging programs in the weeks before their visit.

Thank you for making A Novel Idea the largest community read program of its kind in Oregon. We are excited to see where the future takes us. Happy reading!

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**2023 Main Event**

Wrap up the 20th Anniversary of A Novel Idea with a conversation between authors David James Duncan, María Amparo Escandón, Peter Heller, and Anne Griffin.

Free, but tickets are required and are available starting Monday, April 10, at [www.deschuteslibrary.org/calendar/novelidea](http://www.deschuteslibrary.org/calendar/novelidea) and at all library locations.

*Saturday, April 29, 2023 • 6:00 p.m.*
Bend High • 230 NE 6th St., Bend
Clockwise


Clockwise


Unit Souzou perform during the presentation for *A Tale for the Time Being* (2015) by author Ruth Ozeki.


“I’ve done hundreds of talks over the course of my career, but my time with the Deschutes Public Library and the A Novel Idea program was among the very best.”
—Robert Kurson, 2019, *Rocket Men*

“What a vibrant, wonderful, incredible literary community you have. It’s so impressive!”
—Lily King, 2016, *Euphoria*
When did you know you wanted to be a writer?
To be honest, I knew I wanted to be a writer at the moment I actually became a writer, in December, 1959. It happened in a second grade classroom when our teacher, kindly old Miss Hansen, told the class she wanted us to write a Christmas story. As she rambled on about how the story could be about anything remotely Christmas related, into a part of my head I didn’t even know was called the imagination popped a boy my age about whom I managed to write, “It was the day before Christmas. Jesus was going to be seven years old. He had fed all the animals but the sheep. When he got to the fold one of the sheep were gone its name was De-BORE-ha. Jesus ran to his house and ate his breakfast!”

At which point a minor miracle occurred. My Davidness vanished. All I could now see were the actions and environs of this seven-year-old Jesus. Decades passed before I learned that this kind of vanishing was rather renowned. Flannery O’Connor said of it, “No art is sunk in the self, but rather, in art the self becomes self-forgetful in order to meet the demands of the thing seen and the thing being made.” W. H. Auden said of it, “To pray is to pay attention to something or someone other than oneself. Whenever a person so concentrates their attention—on a landscape, a poem, a geometrical problem, an idol, or the True God—that they completely forget their own ego and desires, they are praying.” The moment Jesus ran to his house to eat his breakfast an art that causes the self to become self-forgetful perceived a visible Jesus setting out to find his lost sheep in a visible desert wilderness. And though I have since learned that this miracle is not rare, I’ve never recovered from its first appearance. Instead of hammering on one another with all that, try to sight in something like this:

When did you know you wanted to be a writer?

What do you hope readers will take away from reading The Brothers K?
A greater willingness to express clumsy thank yous. Consolation. And a sense of what a miracle family and friends can be if we’re truly present to one another. In 1993 I received roughly a thousand letters in response to Brothers K—pre-email, of course. And those letters were loaded with stories about unexpected reconciliations between long-feuding family members disagreeing over religion, or politics, or whether dodging the draft or fighting in Vietnam was the moral high ground, and other issues. And almost every letter writer, in reading Brothers K, had been able to perform a strategic withdrawal that let them start paying a new kind of attention that waited for the world to disclose itself to them, rather than to impose their ideas, skills, altruism, creativity, energies—and, let’s face it, agenda, myopia, compulsions, preconceptions, addictions, illusions, and delusions—upon the world and each other. What gave them that ability? The influence of a family epic in which the world was always disclosing itself when the family members truly attended to its infinite creativity. What blocks awareness of Creation’s ceaseless creativity is not creativity’s disappearance. It’s our callouses and callousness, injuries and injuriousness, ruling manias, divided minds, crossed purposes, absurd speed of passage, and lack of trust. It’s not complicated. Instead of hammering on one another with all that, try to sight in something like this:

What do you hope readers will take away from reading The Brothers K?

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When did you know you wanted to be a writer?

It took me about a year to realize I was born to be a storyteller. It went like this: I was seven years old when I came to my mother with a small bruise on my arm. I told her the babysitter had pinched me. My mother fired her on the spot and she left in tears. Now, the thing is, I loved my babysitter, so I came clean: it was really a bruise caused by the immunization I’d just gotten in school. Alarmed by the terrible consequence of my lie, my grandmother pulled me aside and explained that stories and lies are the same thing. The only difference is the intention. If you trick people into believing your story, it’s a lie and it hurts. If you tell everyone that your story is made up, then it’s fun and entertaining. With that new knowledge, she sent me off to school with a notebook to jot down all my “lies.” By the end of the school year I had filled it with stories that I shared with my classmates, but unfortunately I hadn’t learned anything. So I flunked second grade. But this wasn’t so bad since I had a whole new batch of readers when school started again. The following Christmas I asked Santa Claus for a typewriter, and since then I haven’t stopped telling stories.

What was your favorite (or hardest) scene to write in L.A. Weather?

The theft of the embryos. A writer must be willing to set her morals aside and ask her characters to commit crimes that the writer would never dream of committing. This was a very difficult caper to write because Olivia and Patricia are not the kind of people who would steal something (it’s a whole other matter in the case of klepto Claudia!). So the motivation for stealing the embryos had to be huge, life changing. I knew they’d have to face the implications, but I didn’t want the story to turn into a courtroom drama, so I decided to leave them with the dark cloud of potential personal and legal consequences looming over their heads. Another question I asked myself is, how do I ask these characters to commit this crime, and still remain likeable? How do you develop a character that the reader will side with, even if her actions are questionable, illegal? I’ve always been reluctant to develop villains. I much rather create characters that have flaws and contradictions, that make mistakes and bad choices, and leave the villains to Marvel Comics.

We’ve been thinking a lot about the authors we’ve met over the course of 20 years of A Novel Idea. We’re wondering if you think being a writer is a nature or nurture situation? Tell us why you believe one way or the other.

Your question got me thinking. If I had been born in a family that dismissed my knack for telling stories instead of celebrating it, or if my wise grandmother who taught me the difference between lies and stories had punished me instead of handing me a notebook to write in, or if Santa Claus had brought me a doll with googly eyes instead of my fabulous Olivetti Lettera 32 Ultra-Portable typewriter, or if I hadn’t found an enthusiastic reading community among my elementary school classmates, I’d probably still be a storyteller, but maybe I wouldn’t be a novelist, maybe I’d be a grifter, a con artist, a swindler. I’d probably be in jail for fraud, or maybe I’d be a congresswoman in the House of Representatives. So, nature gave me the gift of storytelling, but nurture was crucial in channeling this talent in the right direction. And I’m grateful.

María Amparo Escandón also answers the question: What do you hope readers will take away from reading L.A. Weather?

Visit dpl.pub/novelidea for her answer.
When did you know you wanted to be a writer?
I knew I was going to be a writer when I was about six and started writing poems. My dad read to me every night before I went to sleep. It was my favorite thing. He read Treasure Island and Never Cry Wolf, but also e.e. cummings and Don Marquis's wonderful book of poems by a cockroach, Archy and Mehitabel. All before I was in second grade. By the time I was 11 he was reading Yeats. I loved it. The music of the language, the images, the wit, the stories—I wanted to do that.

What was your favorite (or hardest) scene to write in The Guide?
I think my favorite scene is in the very beginning when Jack has a discussion about the great Japanese poet Basho with the fishers Yumi and Teiji. Teiji is testing Jack, probing the true depths of his knowledge, and Jack takes the gauntlet and the conversation is peppery and fun. But then the haiku that Jack recites as befitting his present mood is telling, and picturesque and ominous like the lodge itself.

The temple bell stops—
but the sound keeps coming
out of the flowers.

It presages death, and the almost inaudible messages Jack keeps trying to decipher about this strange fishing lodge.

What do you hope readers will take away from reading The Guide?
That a narrative dubbed a thriller can be truly lyrical, and have things to say about our lives that are striking and meaningful. Also, that almost all luxury comes at someone else’s expense.

We’ve been thinking a lot about the authors we’ve met over the course of 20 years of A Novel Idea. We’re wondering if you think being a writer is a nature or nurture situation? Tell us why you believe one way or the other.
I’m always suspicious of the nature vs. nurture contest in any context. They are so intertwined. They foster and impinge on each other. We are now learning that stress and trauma can change DNA and that their effects can be passed from one generation to the next. I think it’s awesome to have a parent that just loves great literature and is excited to share it with you. It’s also lucky to be generally healthy and have good energy, and stamina for reading, and for learning a craft. What are the essential ingredients that make a true writer? Wild love and discipline, and these are both bestowed and cultivated. Amen.
When did you know you wanted to be a writer?

It took me quite a while. I always loved storytelling, both oral and written, from a young age. For many years in my 20s I worked as a bookseller. Following that I worked in the charity sector. When I hit my 40s, however, I felt I had lost my way, and on the advice of a friend, I started to write, mainly just as a hobby. I was 44 and it felt as if I had unleashed something that was always there calling to me but I simply hadn’t been listening well enough. At 46, I began to study for a Masters in creative writing, and there I worked on a draft of my debut novel When All Is Said. Nine months after qualifying and 36 rejections later, I found a publisher.

What was your favorite (or hardest) scene to write in Listening Still?

I am well aware that my books can be emotional reads, often sad, so it might surprise people to know I love writing scenes with a bit of humour. In Listening Still I found those moments between Jeanie and Arthur, the postman and part-time funeral director, especially when he was predicting who in the town might die that weekend. Sometimes I found it in Jeanie’s conversations with her Aunt Harry or her brother Mikey. I enjoyed allowing the main character to interact with these quirky secondary characters to bring a bit of lightness to a book that is set in a funeral home and obviously dealing with death, not to mention a troubled marriage. I think Richard Russo is fantastic at doing this in his novels, balancing the light and shade of serious issues by allowing laughter in.

What do you hope readers will take away from reading Listening Still?

I hope they get a sense of a small town community in Ireland. I know I love to feel this when I read great American writers like Anne Tyler or the superb Canadian writer Mary Lawson. Deeper down, of course, I hope they have empathised with Jeanie’s struggle to really understand herself and what it is she wants from life. I hope, therefore, people will take away that it is important to find a language that allows you to be truthful with those you are closest to. Honesty is something we need to strive toward. It’s about finding your voice, and being respectful to yourself and the listener.

We’ve been thinking a lot about the authors we’ve met over the course of 20 years of A Novel Idea. We’re wondering if you think being a writer is a nature or nurture situation? Tell us why you believe one way or the other.

If storytelling is not innately in you, then, sure, you can do it anyway, you can train to be a writer and maybe you will be successful, but really, do you want to spend your life doing something you love or something you abide? When I get downhearted about my job, because I do—how could you not bearing your soul to the world—I ask myself the question that a writer friend of mine always poses when confronted with a troubled novelist: “What would you do instead?” And my answer is always “nothing,” there is nothing I feel I was born to do more. For me personally, writing is therefore nature. For others it may be nurture. But that is the beauty of this creative world, we writers are all completely different. Perhaps the truth is actually somewhere in between.
Throughout the book, Patricia's teenage child, Dani, is exploring their evolving relationship with gender and identity. What did you take away from Dani’s experience?

Did you get a feel or idea of who Jack was at the beginning of the book? Did you wonder why he was at the lodge? At what point were you surprised about what was going on?

Heller’s writing style captures the quietness of nature and the rhythm of fly fishing—moving with nature. Share your nature experiences, the sounds, the unexpected, the water.

What was going on with the camera? Discuss the clues Heller added at the beginning of the book and did you think the scream was an Owl?

Discuss Alison K, who is independent, loves nature, is a beautiful singer, and knows her way around mountains. Why doesn’t Alison leave the cabin?

Re-read the “Winter Brook” poem by Li Xue on p.180 and discuss the nature, musical sounds, and connections with the characters in the book.

When did you first suspect that Ann was not as innocent as you first believed? What was the biggest shock for you in the book?

Which of the characters did you resonate with the most in the book? The least?

How would you describe Jeanie Masterson’s growth throughout the novel?

How does the concept of “family” make itself known in Listening Still?

Consider the idea of “last wishes” as it is explored in this book.

What similarities do you see in the characters who can speak to the dead? What differences do you see?

Explore how different cultures handle death. Did anything stand out for you that you did or did not agree with?

When did you first suspect that Ann was not as innocent as you first believed? What was the biggest shock for you in the book?

Which of the characters did you resonate with the most in the book? The least?
Programs

Exhibit Sneak Peak: One Book at a Time at Deschutes Historical Museum
Get a sneak peak of the exhibit highlighting 20 years of A Novel Idea.
Friday, March 31, 4–6:00 p.m.
Deschutes Historical Museum
129 NW Idaho, Bend

One Book at a Time: A Novel Idea Turns 20 Exhibit
Explore 20 years of A Novel Idea, curated by our friends at Deschutes Historical Museum. Show your library card for free admission throughout the month of April. Deschutes Historical Society preserves, promotes, and celebrates our shared local history.
Saturday, April 1 • 10:00 a.m.
Deschutes Historical Museum
129 NW Idaho Avenue, Bend

Transformation: Waiting for Answers
Renee Gonzalez explores themes of transformation through dance and story, both traditional and contemporary. Renee develops culturally responsive arts-integrated curriculum for the Latino Community Association.
Saturday, April 1 • 3:00 p.m.
Downtown Bend Library

Disaster Preparedness: The More You Know
What would you do in the case of a natural disaster? Look at examples of what future earthquakes and volcanic activity might look like in Central Oregon, and how we can prepare. Geologist Dr. Daniele McKay is an adjunct instructor in the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Oregon.
Sunday, April 2 • 3:00 p.m.
Downtown Bend Library

Death Café AGES 16+
Eat tasty treats, drink tea, and discuss death with a friendly group. Free of agenda or ideology, the aim is to increase awareness of death to help people make the most of their (finite) lives. End-of-life doula Cheryl Adcox has been an RN since 2003 with a background in oncology and hospice care.
Tuesday, April 11 • 6–7:30 p.m.
Becky Johnson Center
412 SW 8th Street, Redmond

Diamonds in the Desert: Bend’s Baseball History in a Few Innings
Step back in time to when baseball wasn’t just a favorite pastime, but a way to build commerce in communities; where the swat of the wood bat rang true whether you were a Bend Babe or a Bend Elk. Vanessa Ivey loves baseball and is the Deschutes Historical Museum manager.
Tuesday, April 4 • 6:00 p.m.
East Bend Library

Guided Tour of MacDougall & Sons Bat Co.*
See the handcrafting of wooden bats made locally in Bend. Family-owned MacDougall & Sons handcrafts 100% real-wood baseball bats. Founder John MacDougall is a self-purported lifelong baseball addict, coach, and father of two baseball players. Registration required.
Thursday, April 6 • 2:30 p.m.
Downtown Bend Library

Los Orígenes Hispanos de Oregón
Aproximación histórica a la presencia hispana en la costa de Norteamérica (1543–1819).
sábado, 8 de abril • 1:30 p.m.
East Bend Library

What Is Left Unsaid: Communicating What Matters Most
Explore how to plan ahead for living well as you age. Facilitators guide participants through various preparedness considerations that arise during illness and end-of-life experiences. Elizabeth Johnson and Erin Collins are Executive Director and Program Director for The Peaceful Presence Project.
Monday, April 10 • 6:00 p.m.
Downtown Bend Library

Different Wars, Different Choices
Brothers Steve and Pete Goodrich in conversation about their choices regarding service during wartime. Hear from Steve, the eldest, about his decision to seek conscientious objector status and from Pete, the youngest, about his choice to pursue a career in the armed services.
Saturday, April 15 • 11:00 a.m.
Redmond Proficiency Academy
657 SW Glacier Avenue, Redmond

Three writing workshops—with authors David James Duncan, Anne Griffin, and Peter Heller—are being offered as a fundraiser for the Deschutes Public Library Foundation. Visit www.dplfoundation.org for more information and tickets.
FIVE PINT MARY
Enjoy a unique blend of Irish music and American folk rock. Five Pint Mary performs a well-honed brew of spirited music, both traditional and original. Influenced by the old world, pub-style music of Ireland and Scotland, infused with a ripple of American bluegrass. Sláinte!
Saturday, April 15 • 3:00 p.m.
Wild Ride Brewing
332 SW 5th Street, Redmond

HEALING POETRY: THE ART OF LIVING
Through Grief*
Discuss the healing potential of poetry and write your own. Hear how psychologists and poetry therapists understand the healing potential of poetry. Carol Barrett holds doctorates in both Clinical Psychology and Creative Writing. Registration required.
Monday, April 17 • 5:30–7:30 p.m.
Downtown Bend Library

L.A. WEATHER BOOK DISCUSSION
Discuss L.A. Weather with friends and neighbors. Attend in person or virtually.
Monday, April 17 • 6:00 p.m.
Online only
Monday, April 24 • 4:30 p.m.
Sunriver Books & Music
57100 Beaver Drive, Sunriver

SUSTAINABLE SELF: COPING, IDENTITY, AND ACTION WITHIN CLIMATE CHANGE
Get insights on coping with your environmental and climate concerns, exploring your unique environmental identity, and adapting your skills to take meaningful action in support of your values. Dr. Thomas Doherty is a psychologist specializing in addressing people’s concerns about climate change.
Tuesday, April 18 • 6:00 p.m.
Online only

RELIGION 101: THE BROTHERS K DISCUSSION
Engage in a lively discussion on Christianity, Buddhism, and baseball. Four LARGE questions will be considered, including, what do we mean by the word religion? and, why is religion so dog-gone divisive? Rev. Dr. Steven “Steve” Trotter is a retired pastor and university teacher.
Wednesday, April 19 • 6:00 p.m.
Redmond Proficiency Academy, Glacier Bldg
657 SW Glacier Avenue, Redmond
Tuesday, April 25 • 6:00 p.m.
East Bend Library

FIRST-TIME FLY-FISHING DEMO*
Learn the basics of fly fishing in this demo hosted by Confluence Fly Shop. This program is intended for first-timers. For as long as he can remember, fly fishing and fly tying has been part of Tye Krueger’s life; he now owns Confluence Fly Shop.
Friday, April 21 • 10:00 a.m.–noon
Confluence Fly Shop
375 SW Powerhouse Drive, Ste 100, Bend

IRISH BANJO & HOMEGROWN SONGS
Come listen to Irish dance tunes and folks songs. Ian Carrick’s five-string banjo, four-string tenor banjo, and voice will be accompanied by Collin Rhoton’s rhythmic guitar and bass playing. Expect authentic, mildly jazzy folk songs woven together with Irish dance tunes and bodhrán playing.
Saturday, April 22 • noon
Sunriver Library
Saturday, April 22 • 4:00 p.m.
Downtown Bend Library

ESTATE PLANNING 101
Learn differences between wills and trusts, the upsides and downsides of each, and common myths and misconceptions about other estate planning topics. Collin Edmonds is an attorney who runs his own law practice.
Monday, April 24 • 6:00 p.m.
Downtown Bend Library

WRITING ABOUT TRAUMA IN TRAUMATIC TIMES*
Learn how to write about trauma without making it worse, and explore how the physiological processes of trauma and shame interact with a writing process. As a trauma-writing doula, Kati Standefer assists writers in sharing hard stories. Registration required.
Tuesday, April 25 • 6:00–8:00 p.m.
Online only

MEXICAN SPICES COOKING CLASS AT AROME*
Build your own Mexican spices blend as you learn about different spices and their various uses that make the food exciting and rich. Alex Schultz is the Retail Store Manager of Arome. He is a gourmet food enthusiast with more than 26 years of restaurant experience. Registration required.
Wednesday, April 26 • 5:30–7:00 p.m.
Arome
432 SW 6th Street, Redmond

TU VOZ ESCRITA*
Descubre y desarrolla su voz escrita y aprovecha su creatividad. Se require registro previo.
sábado, 29 de abril • 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.
Latino Community Association
2680 NE Twin Knolls Drive, Bend

THE GUIDE BOOK DISCUSSION
Discuss The Guide with friends and neighbors. Attend in person or virtually.
Wednesday, May 3 • 6:00 p.m.
Roundabout Books
900 NW Mt. Washington Drive, Bend

*Registration required

2023 MAIN EVENT
Wrap up the 20th Anniversary of A Novel Idea with a conversation between authors David James Duncan, María Amparo Escandón, Peter Heller, and Anne Griffin. Free, but tickets are required and are available starting Monday, April 10 at www.deschuteslibrary.org/calendar/novelidea and at all library locations.
Saturday, April 29, 2023 • 6:00 p.m. • Bend High • 230 NE 6th St., Bend
You make it happen—thank you. If you’ve enjoyed A Novel Idea, consider making a tax-deductible gift at www.dpifoundation.org