

Learn what makes writers tick at Get Lit at the Beach

Love to read? Thinking about writing the great American novel? Then clear your calendar April 8 through April 10 — Tolovana Arts Colony presents the fifth annual Get Lit at the Beach: A Gathering for Readers.

The 2016 event offers bibliophiles a unique opportunity to rub elbows with four fantastic authors: Terry Brooks, Jess Walter, Jonathan Evison, and Elizabeth Engstrom.

Bestselling author — and part-time Cannon Beach resident — Brooks says the event's roots lie in a conversation he, former Cannon Beach Book Company owner Valerie Ryan, and former Cannon Beach Mayor Mike Morgan once had.

"Cannon Beach is about the arts, with lots of art festivals," he says. "We thought there should be some kind of literary event."

And why not? Brooks says Cannon Beach is a readers town, making it a logical setting for such a gathering. The word has certainly gotten out and attendees have come from all around the country and the world.

The thrust of Get Lit at the Beach lies in making authors accessible. Rather than concentrating on a particular genre in a workshop setting, the weekend encourages attendees to interact with writers in events that are largely informal, such as a reception, a banquet, readings and a free panel discussion.

Brooks likes the departure from the format he's seen at many other literary events.

"We don't offer writing craft classes; it's different than anything else," he says. "It's a chance to learn what makes writers tick."

Brooks calls the weekend "completely immersive," adding that attendees and authors alike benefit from the opportunity to intermingle.

Because the literary community is rather close-knit, Brooks says he makes a lot of phone calls to round up panelists each year, generally netting four or five.

"That's how it's done in the writing community," he says. "Friends who are writers stay in touch, and I call in favors every year."

Considering the location, it often doesn't take much convincing.

Walter, the weekend's keynote speaker, is familiar with Brooks' recruiting skills. "The

inimitable Terry Brooks has been trying to get me to come to Cannon Beach for a few years," he says. He notes that coming to the event allows him to bring his family, something he rarely gets to do on speaking tours.

It's hard to talk about Get Lit without remembering the late Valerie Ryan, one of the event's driving forces.

"Valerie was a force of nature and her knowledge of authors was invaluable," Brooks says. He adds that the event has allowed him to meet authors he'd never heard of and now admires, like Jim Lynch and Willy Vlautin.

Walter agrees, remembering the importance of Ryan and her bookstore.

"One of the first events I ever did as an author was for the great Valerie Ryan," he says. "Independent bookstores are not just relevant to my work; they are the lifeblood of literary fiction."

This year's event will feature a theme: authors having their books adapted for television or movies.

Each of the panelists has experience with that side of publishing: Evison's "The Fundamentals of Caregiving" was made into a movie and shown at Sundance; Brooks' "Shannara Chronicles" is an MTV series; Engstrom's "Candyland" was made into a movie starring Gary Busey; Walter's "Financial Lives of Poets" has had talks of a movie starring Jack Black.

Brooks says that while that is great for book sales and bragging rights, he cautions that authors shouldn't set that as a career pinnacle.

"Writing is the pinnacle," he says.

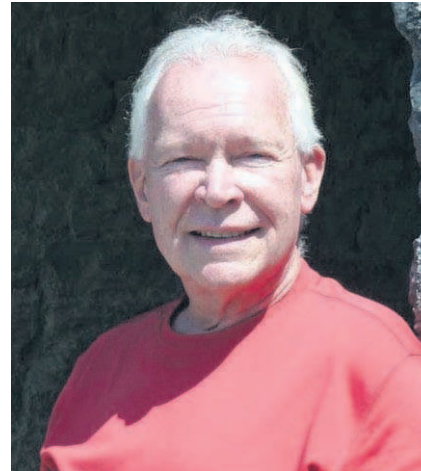
Brooks adds that the reality of most film adaptations is that authors retain little control over the process.

"A friend of mine told me that having your book adapted for TV or the movies is like having a child kidnapped by a cult," he says, laughing.

And what advice do these authors pass on to would-be writers?

"Be patient. Be bold. Be humble. Be confident. Get over yourself. Don't give in to jealousy, commercial pressure or fear," Walter says. "Volunteer, do charity work — for God's sake be a decent human being. And whatever you do, don't ever take advice from authors."

This year's event will feature a theme: authors having their books adapted for television or movies.



Submitted photos

Author Terry Brooks will appear at Get Lit.



Author Jess Walter will be the keynote speaker Saturday evening.



Elizabeth Engstrom is author of 14 books.



Jonathan Evison will be a featured author at Get Lit at the Beach.

For information on the event, or to register, visit www.tolovanaartscolony.org

the arts
VISUAL ARTS • LITERATURE • THEATER • MUSIC & MORE

Story by DAN HAAG