Festival Highlights Kid's Books from Local Authors

If you love books and reading as most of us do, consider going to the book festival scheduled at the Jefferson Parish Regional Library, 4747 West Napoleon Avenue, Metairie.  It sounds great and has some wonderful authors featured. It will be worth a visit to see these exciting presentations. The Festival information from Chris Smith, Manager of Adult Programming at the Jefferson Parish Library is below.

I am proud to say that author Freddi Evans, who is a featured author, is a personal friend and a long-time LA Reading Association Member.  If you can't make the festival, do check out some of her books.  They would make excellent reads for an African American Read in February when we celebrate Black History Month!

Gerri Settoon,

LRA State Coordinator

***Everyone Has a Story!***

**Festival Highlights Kid’s Books from Local Authors**

**METAIRIE –**“Everyone Has a Story,” is the theme of the 2023 JPL Children’s Book Festival that occurs at 10 a.m., Saturday, Dec. 2, at the East Bank Regional Library, 4747 W. Napoleon, Metairie. This event is free of charge and is open to the public. There is no registration.

The theme, “Everyone Has a Story,’ reflects the growing diversification of characters and plots in children’s literature by New Orleans authors and why it’s important for children to experience characters, plots and dialog that is different from what they know. Susan Larson will moderate a panel featuring three local children’s authors: Freddi Williams Evans, Michelle Jackson and Denise McConduit.

**Susan Larson** is host of the WWNO-FM radio show, *The Reading Life,*and the author of *The Booklover’s Guide to New Orleans.* She was the book editor for *The New Orleans Times-Picayune* from 1988-2009. She has served on the boards of the Tennessee Williams/New Orleans Literary Festival and the New Orleans Public Library. She is the founder of the New Orleans chapter of the Women's National Book Association, which presents the annual Diana Pinckley Prizes for Crime Fiction. In 2007, she received the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities lifetime achievement award for her contributions to the literary community.

**Freddi Williams Evans**is an author, independent scholar and arts education consultant. She is internationally recognized for her scholarship on Congo Square, a world-renown landmark of African and African American culture in New Orleans. Her book, *Congo Square: African Roots in New Orleans*, the first comprehensive study of the location, received the 2012 Louisiana Humanities Book of the Year Award. Her research and advocacy influenced the New Orleans City Council ordinance, which changed the name Beauregard Square, named after Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard in 1893, to Congo Square in 2011. Along with numerous essays, she has published award-winning books for children including: *Come Sunday, A Young Reader’s History of Congo Square*, *Hush Harbor: Praying in Secret*, *The Battle of New Orleans: The Drummer’s Story,*and *A Bus of Our Own*.

**Michelle Jackson is an a**uthor, entrepreneur, and nonprofit director. She published her first book, *The Heart of a Man*, a Christian fiction novel, in 2010. In 2014, the book was awarded a top prize in The Author's Zone Annual Writer's Competition, General Fiction Category. She was also the recipient of the Princeton Literary Review Gold Standard. *Her second novel, From Darkness to Night: Book One - Family Secrets*, was released in 2020. It was selected as an Award-Winning Finalist in the American Book Fest's Fiction: African-American category of the 2020 Best Book Awards. Also, the novel was added to the Broward Community College's African-American literature curriculum in 2023. Jackson's third book is Poppi Makes Cajun Popcorn Magic: The 10-Step Guide to Building a Successful Food Startup. This is her first in a series of comic books that teaches youth how to start scalable businesses. The Poppi Book was recognized as a Finalist in the American Book Fest's Fiction: Children's Educational category of the 2022 Best Book Awards. Jackson is the owner of PR Solutions LLC, a strategic marketing and corporate event planning firm. She is the executive director of LifeSkills Foundation and the founder of the Black Writers Workspace Online Community, comprised of more than 13,000+ black writers and readers.

**Denise McConduit** grew up in a family of 13 children in New Orleans, and began writing at a young age, so it was only natural that she became a writer as an adult. She started with poetry, then magazine articles, and finally… books. When her son D.J. was seven years old, he had the opportunity to ride in a Mardi Gras parade. Denise wrote a story about his ride. She submitted it to a publisher and *D.J. and the Zulu Parade* became her first children’s book. That book led to two other stories about the intrepid boy: *D.J. and the Jazz Fest* and *D.J. and the Debutante Ball*. Since then, Denise has inspired countless children to write and has become a cultural ambassador for the City of New Orleans.

Many other children’s authors will be present to talk about and sell books to patrons who may be looking for holiday gifts. They include: Karen Konnerth, Louis Duet, Laura Roach Dragon, M.H. Herlong, Leah Eskine, Laura Michaud, Gideon Hodge, and others.

For more information regarding this presentation, contact Chris Smith, Manager of Adult Programming for the library, at 504-889-8143 or [wcsmith@jefferson.lib.la.us](mailto:wcsmith@jefferson.lib.la.us).