



Sauder Village

Storytellers Conference

# Meet Our Presenters & Vendors





## **Katie Gilliland, editor/owner of Finch & Fern Book Co.**

**8:30 – 9:15 am**

### **“My Evolving Journey”**

Join Katie on her journey to become a bookstore owner and its evolution over time. From sustainability and protecting the environment, keeping books affordable and accessible, to giving indie authors a home for their stories, and now to helping those authors shape their stories into the best they can be.

### **Bio**

Katie is a transplant from the Pacific Northwest with a life-long passion for the written word and its accessibility. She lives in Michigan with her husband, her three amazing kids, and her small menagerie of family pets. Her bookstore, Finch & Fern Book Co, is located in Sylvania, where she also spends her days editing books for indie authors across the country.





## Autumn Owens, playwright

9:15 – 10:15 am

### “Between the Quotation Marks”

Dial in your dialogue, expel expository exchanges, and create unique cadences for your characters. In this short, interactive workshop, students will take a page from a playwright’s playscript to learn how to balance voice and story in their characters’ speech.

### Author Bio

Autumn Faith Owens is a playwright based out of Upstate New York. Her plays *Flux*, *The Kingdom of Academia*, and *(Mis)adventures in Live Theatre* are published and licensed through Brooklyn Publishers and have been produced numerous times across Korea, Japan, Canada, and the United States. Autumn was a 2021 runner-up in the national YouthPlays New Voices competition and has also received the Bethel University Earl Award for her work. She is a member of the Dramatists Guild of America. Autumn also enjoys writing prose and poetry in her spare time, and has previously been published in *Daily Science Fiction*.





## Steve Engel, storyteller

10:15 – 10:45 am

“Oral Storytelling with Don, Steve, & Bill”

### Bio

Steve Engel has spent his life in love with stories—on the page, in the classroom, and on the stage. For nearly 30 years he taught English at the high school and college levels, all while directing and producing theater, including the very first performance of the *24-Hour Plays* and the first high school version of the project. He now channels his love of narrative mischief into *Steve Engel's Bad Idea*, a company that serves up essays, comedy, and gourmet food in an inventive twist on dinner theater. Learn more at [steveengelsbadidea.com](http://steveengelsbadidea.com).



## Bill Senecal, storyteller





## Deb Ridgway, creative spirit

10:45 – 11:15 am

### “Guided Timed Writing”

This session follows the Amherst Writers & Artists belief that every person who writes is a writer and every writer deserves a safe environment to experiment, learn, and develop their craft. Bring pen and paper to join in the creative process.

### Bio

A northwest Ohio native, Deb is a creative spirit who loves to explore varied media – from painting, photography, beading, and poetry to fiber arts. She loves sharing what she has learned and has taught painting, quilting, embroidery, various crafting classes, and guided writing since 2017. When there is not a paint brush, pen, hook, or needle in her hands you’ll find her with a camera traveling dirt roads and soaking up the scenic beauty of nature.





## Ann Weir, author

11:15 am – 12 noon

### “A Year of Learning to be Me Again”

As I was coming up on my 60th birthday, I was quite aware that while I was a wife, a mom, a grandma, and an employee, somewhere along the way I realized, even as all these roles continued and grew - I lost Ann. I wanted to do something to help me become me again and to open that ever shrinking comfort zone. “Sixty During 60” was never meant to be a book. It was just a list. But how could I not share my experiences?

### Bio

Ann Belote Weir graduated from Siena Heights College with a BA in English Communications. She lives in Ossineke, Michigan two miles from beautiful Lake Huron. When she isn't working, she enjoys spending time with her family. Especially her grandchildren.





## Kate Zirkle, Founder/Executive Director American Diary Project

12 noon – 1 pm

### **“What We Leave Behind: Diaries and the Stories That Shape Us”**

Diaries capture the moments we rarely think of as history, until they are. In this keynote, Kate Zirkle shares how journaling shaped her life and inspired the creation of the American Diary Project. Through moving examples and personal reflection, she explores why preserving everyday stories matters and how writing helps us make meaning of the lives we’re living and the legacy we leave behind.

### **Bio**

Kate Zirkle is the founder and executive director of the American Diary Project. She is an avid diarist and member of the Society of Ohio Archivists. She shares her home in Cleveland, Ohio, with her wife, dogs, and enough cats to earn her cat lady status.





## Rose McWilliams-Nowak, author

**1:15 – 2:00 pm**

**“The Castaways Within: Escaping The Island of Self-Sabotage”** uses *Gilligan’s Island* as a simple, relatable way to explain why we sometimes get stuck. Each character represents a different part of us, and “Gilligan” is the inner voice of fear and doubt that shows up for everyone. The book helps readers recognize their own patterns of self-sabotage and begin a kinder, more empowering journey toward self-awareness and change.

### **Bio**

Rose McWilliams Nowak lives in Northeast Michigan with her husband, Roy. She is the founder of the Alpena Institute of Massage and Better Living Massage & Wellness. Guided by the philosophy of Ubuntu – I am because we are, her work centers on compassion, connection, and helping others feel better so they can live better.





## Don Allison, author, journalist, oral storyteller

2:00 – 3:00 pm

### “I Met a Ghost at Gettysburg”

With the eye of an experienced journalist, award-winning author and newspaper editor Don Allison will share stories of his personal encounters with the paranormal. Many of his experiences took place on and around the historic Civil War battlefield of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and at his historic 1835 home in Northwest Ohio also has Civil War connections. In addition to detailing his experiences with the paranormal, Don will offer tips on how to bring life and realism to storytelling and writing.

### Bio

Donald L. Allison, a veteran journalist and author, is a lifelong resident of Williams County, Ohio, where he shares a historic home with his wife, Diane. After a career as a journalist and editor that spanned more than 40 years, and even in retirement, Don’s weekly column “On My Mind” continues to be a Bryan Times fixture.

Don turned his attention to writing nonfiction books. His work include “A Choice Between Right and Duty: Love and War in the Civil War Letters of Lt. col. Luther Strong,” “I Met a Ghost at Gettysburg: A Journalist’s Journey Into the Paranormal,” “I Met More Ghosts at Gettysburg: A Journalist’s Paranormal Journey Continues,” “Hell on Belle Isle: Diary of a Civil War POW,” “The Best of On My Mind: The Bryan Times Newspaper Columns of Don Allison,” “The Best of On My Mind Vol. II” and “Almost Award Winning Christmas Carols: Holiday Hilarity.”





**3:00 – 4:00 pm**

**“IronClad Comics: Forging the Heros of Tomorrow”**

Join the founders of IronClad Comics as they reveal how bold, immersive stories can reignite a love of reading in a distracted generation. Discover a new kind of graphic novel, where epic storytelling meets real meaning, and every page pulls you deeper into a world worth believing in.

**David Timm Jr., author/entrepreneur**

David Timm is the author and entrepreneur, co-founder of IronClad Comics, a brand new independent graphic novel publisher here to forge the next generation of stories for those who have been left behind by the industry. He is the author and creator of The Warden, the first book released in the IronClad universe.ake meaning of the lives we’re living and the legacy we leave behind.

**Cody Karamol, author/entrepreneur**

Cody Karamol is the author and entrepreneur, co-founder of IronClad Comics, a brand new independent graphic novel publisher here to forge the next generation of stories for those who have been left behind by the industry. He is the co-author of The Warden, but also has big plans for books of his own. His first scheduled book is set to release after The Warden Book 1 is completed.

IronClad Comics is an independent graphic novel publisher from Northwest Ohio committed to creating the mythology of the 21st century. Inspired by the enduring power of ancient myth, theology, classical and modern literature, and the narrative artistry of comics, film, and television, IronClad crafts stories that are bold, timeless, and resonant. Our mission is to tell the kinds of stories we’ve always needed, rooted in truth, beauty, and hope, while offering a cohesive, accessible universe for readers 13 and up. Every series, short story, and character we publish is deliberately constructed to engage both the imagination and the soul.



# Be sure to join us for the Storytellers Spoken Word Night

6:00 pm

Doors open

6:30 – 8:30 pm

Storytellers take the mic

