

Author series kicks off on MLK Day

Pulitzer winning biography writer among four bestselling headliners

SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

A Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Martin Luther King Jr. is among the books in a series that begins on Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Monday, Jan. 19.

Also in the author series is the fatal last voyage of Capt. James Cook; passion for the pigskin in 100 memorable moments; and the improbable success story of the American bookstore.

Presented by the nonprofit Friends of the Library of Collier County at the Hilton Naples, the Nonfiction Author Series consists of four separate author presentations — each with a hot/cold buffet breakfast and a book signing by the author. The series is a fundraiser for the Collier County Public Library, which has 10 branches.

The 2026 authors are:

■ **Evan Friss**, author of "The Bookshop: A History of the American Bookstore" on Monday, Jan. 19;

■ **Joe Posnanski**, author of "Why We Love Football: A History in 100 Moments," on Monday, Feb. 2;

■ **Jonathan Eig**, author of "King: A Life," on Monday, Feb. 16; and

■ **Hampton Sides**, author of "The Wide Wide Sea: Imperial Ambition, First Contact and the Fateful Final Voyage of Captain James Cook" on Tuesday, March 17.

Lew Paper, chairman of the Friends' Nonfiction Author Series committee, extolled the extraordinary nature of this year's series.

"For the first time in the series history," Paper said, "all of our authors have had a book on the New York Times best-seller list."

"And more than that," he added, "the 2026 series preserves the commitment to diversity."

Evan Friss starts off the series on Monday, Jan. 19, with "The Bookshop: A History of the American Bookstore," an affectionate and engaging look at the evolution of American booksellers, from the days of Benjamin Franklin to the present.

People magazine called it "a heartfelt, essential love letter," and Time Magazine named it one of the 100 "must read books" of 2024.

Friss, the author of two previous books on cycling, is a history professor at James Madison University in Virginia.

Acclaimed sportswriter Joe Posnanski takes the hand-off on Monday, Feb. 2, talking about his latest book, "Why We Love Football: A History in 100 Moments," which is a follow-up to his best-selling book "Why We Love Baseball."

Posnanski has won two Emmy Awards

for his work on the Olympics and has been named Sportswriter of the Year by multiple organizations. The Wall Street Journal called him "contemporary sports writing's biggest star."

In "Why We Love Football," Posnanski describes 100 iconic moments in college and professional football, ranging from the hilarious to the heartbreaking.

Jonathan Eig will talk on Monday, Feb. 16, about "King: A Life," which won the 2024 Pulitzer Prize for biography. This is the first biography of Martin Luther King Jr. to make use of recently declassified FBI files. But more than that, the book is an intimate examination of a brave but emotionally troubled man, who preached peaceful protest for the civil rights movement — but was rarely at peace with himself.

The New York Times hailed "King: A Life" as a "landmark biography." The Chicago Tribune said the book "is such a nuanced biography, it's like having Martin Luther King sitting in your living room, reading a newspaper."

Eig is the author of five other books, three of which were also New York Times best-sellers, including "Luckiest Man: The Life and Death of Lou Gehrig."

The final event in the Nonfiction Author Series will be on a Tuesday — March 17 — rather than the usual Monday.

Hampton Sides' "The Wide Wide Sea: Imperial Ambition, First Contact and the Fateful Final Voyage of Captain James Cook" takes us back to the 18th century, when Cook, Britain's premier explorer, set off for the farthest reaches of the Pacific Ocean.

In February 1779, two-and-a-half years later, Cook was killed by the native population on the island of Hawaii, a surprise to many in Europe because, among European explorers, he was considered to have had more respect for Indigenous peoples and cultures than most other explorers.

The Associated Press called the book "riveting." Sides is the author of five other New York Times best-sellers, including "Blood and Thunder" and "Ghost Soldiers."

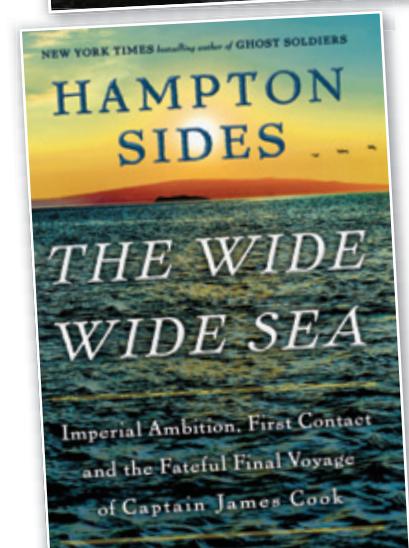
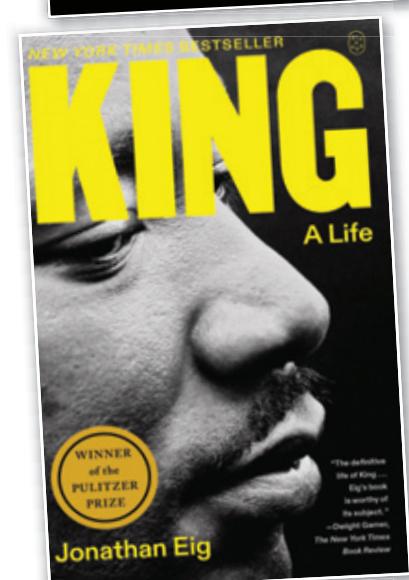
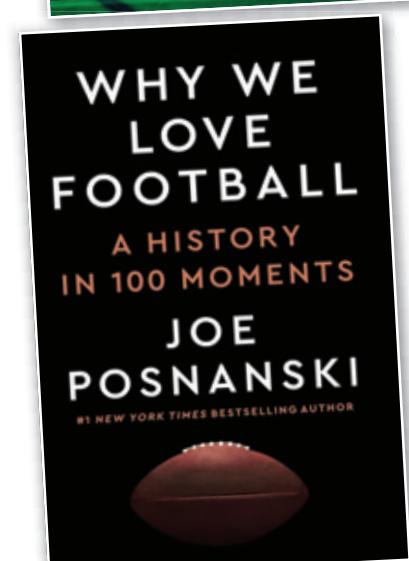
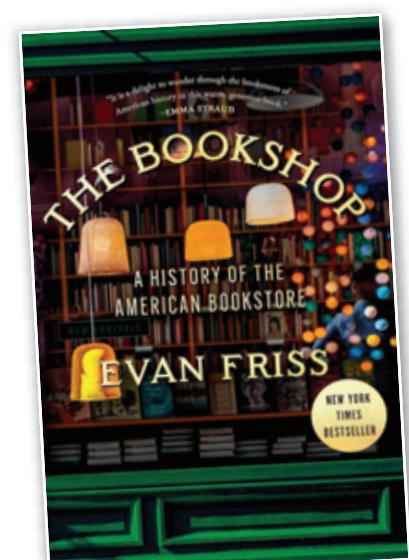
Each presentation in the series will include a breakfast buffet, featuring choices of hot and cold entrees, including eggs with bacon and sausage, cereals, yogurts, fruits, a variety of breads, juices and coffee.

The 2026 sponsors of the Nonfiction Author Series include The Club at Olde Cypress, Hilton Naples, Stock Development and Books-A-Million as platinum sponsor; Gulf Coast International Properties and John R. Wood Properties as gold sponsors; BrickTop's Restaurant, The Capital Grille Restaurant, Cornerstone Builders of Southwest Florida, J. Alexander's Restaurant, Naples MacFriends User Group and Wynn's Market as silver sponsors, all supporting public libraries. ■

In the KNOW

Nonfiction Author Series

- Four separate author presentations with a breakfast and a book signing to raise funds for the Collier County Public Library
- When:** Breakfast is served at 8:30 a.m.; the authors speak shortly after 9:15 a.m., followed by a book signing
- Where:** Hilton Naples, 5111 Tamiami Trail N., Naples
- Author lineup:**
 - Evan Friss, Monday, Jan. 19



COURTESY IMAGES

THE UNDERCOVERS

JAN
22ND
7:30PM

MOTOWN TRIBUTE

Hear beloved hits like Kenny Rogers' "The Gambler," Lionel Richie's "Hello" and Smokey Robinson's "Cruisin'."

BEATLEMANIA NOW | A Beatles Journey from 1964 to 1970 | Tribute | Jan 16TH

APPALACHIAN ROAD SHOW | Music, Traditions & History | Bluegrass | Jan 17TH

EDWARDS TWINS | The Ultimate Vegas Variety Show | Tribute | Jan 18TH & 19TH

YOUNG GUNS | A Tribute to the Superstars of Country Music | Country | Jan 19TH

VANESSA COLLIER | Saxophone Prowess & Soulful Vocals | Blues | Jan 23RD

FOR TICKETS, visit ARTSBONITA.ORG or call 239.495.8989

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Supported in part
by funding from:



- Joe Posnanski, Monday, Feb. 2
- Jonathan Eig, Monday, Feb. 16
- Hampton Sides, Tuesday, March 17
- Cost:** Series tickets are \$375 for all four events for members of the Friends of the Library of Collier County and \$420 for nonmembers. Friends memberships begin at \$50 per year. Tickets can be purchased through the Friends website, collier-friends.org, or by calling the Friends office, 239-262-8135, or emailing Marlene Haywood, the Friends' program director, mhaywood@collier-friends.org.