

# Friends of the Library’s author spotlight expands to three events, starting in October

SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

Novelists’ subjects range from witchcraft in Italy to Hoffa’s unsolved disappearance, to the 1950s “divorce ranches” in Reno.

Big changes are afoot with the author spotlight series, which expands to three events headlined by best-selling writers and hosted by the Friends of the Library of Collier County.

The three intimate talks and book signings in October, November and April are a chance to meet the authors while helping the nonprofit Friends group raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for Collier County’s public libraries. This year, a special discounted series ticket is available exclusively to members of the Friends.

The 2025-26 Author Spotlight Series will feature:

Sarah Penner, a Southwest Florida favorite whose latest romantic, supernatural novel is “The Amalfi Curse,” on Thursday afternoon, Oct. 9.

Lew Paper, the acclaimed author of several nonfiction books, turns to fiction-based-on-fact for his novel “Legacy of Lies,” about the still-unsolved disappearance of labor leader Jimmy Hoffa, on Thursday afternoon, Nov. 6.

Rowan Beaird, whose debut novel “The Divorcées,” which is set at a 1950s Reno, Nev., divorce ranch, was praised by People magazine as a “rollicking thriller,” on Thursday afternoon, April 9.

Events are held at The Norris Center,



the former longtime home of the Gulfshore Playhouse, located at the southern end of Cambier Park near Downtown Naples.

The members-only series ticket to all three events is \$150, a significant savings over buying an individual ticket to each speaker. Seating will be general admission, and tickets are selling quickly. Each talk will be followed by a Q&A and a book signing.

Sarah Penner, who was the very first

author spotlight speaker when the series launched in 2022, returns in October to kick off this year’s expanded series. She’s now published three best-selling novels — “The Lost Apothecary,” which sold over 1 million copies worldwide, “The London Séance Society,” and earlier this year, “The Amalfi Curse.”

Known for her exotic locales and for weaving the occult and mysticism into her compelling plots, Penner has set “The Amalfi Curse” along the Italian coast, in

In the KNOW

## Friends of the Library’s Author Spotlight Series

- **What:** Author lectures that are a fundraiser by the Friends of the Library of Collier County
- **Where:** The Norris Center, 755 Eighth Ave. S., Naples
- **When:**
  - Sarah Penner**, Thursday, Oct. 9, at 2 p.m., followed by a book signing
  - Lew Paper**, Thursday, Nov. 6, at 2 p.m., followed by a book signing
  - Rowan Beaird**, Thursday, April 9, at 2 p.m., followed by a book signing
- **Cost:** A special offer ONLY for current Friends of the Library of Collier County members is a series ticket to see all three authors for \$150. Otherwise, single tickets are \$55 for each lecture for current Friends members and \$65 per lecture for nonmembers. All seating is general admission. Friends memberships begin at \$40/year and provide exclusive access and discounts to many other programs.

Positano and that “other” Naples.

With a rumbling Mount Vesuvius in the background, Penner’s dual timeline features a modern-day archeologist trying to recover a cache of jewels her father spotted at the bottom of the Mediterranean off Positano shortly before he died. Then, looking back to the 1820s, the novel introduces the Amalfi Coast’s beautiful and compelling red-haired

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# AUTHORS

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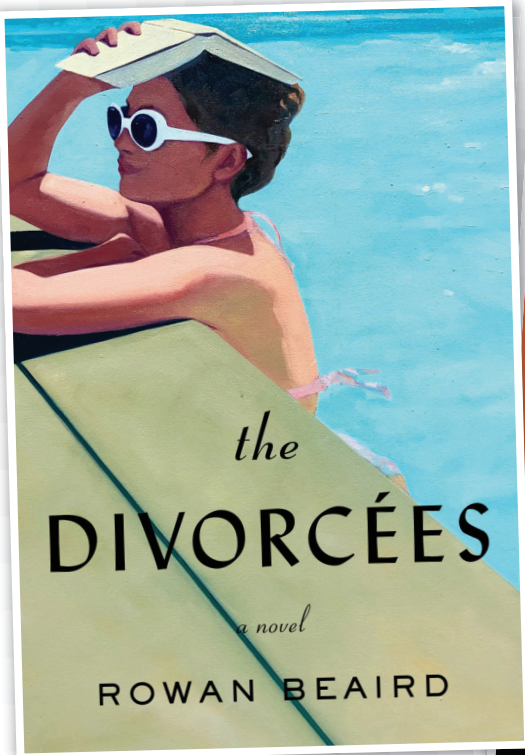
“strega del mare” — sea witches — who used their spells to whip up the sea and protect their village from pirates and criminals.

The second Author Spotlight speaker, Lew Paper, presents a mystery of a different kind in his novel, “Legacy of Lies,” which imagines what really happened that day 50 years ago when controversial labor leader Jimmy Hoffa vanished near Detroit. Hoffa has never been found, and no one has confessed to killing him or disposing of his body.

Reviewers called Paper’s speculation about Hoffa’s fate captivating, masterful, intriguing and creative. “Legacy of Lies” was named a finalist for Best Thriller by the National Indie Excellence Awards.

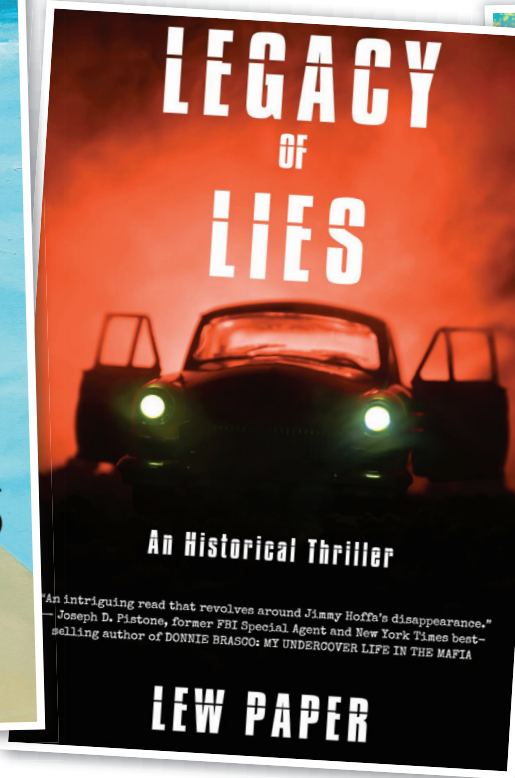
Paper, a retired Washington, D.C., attorney who now lives in Naples, is known for his nonfiction books such as “In the Cauldron: Terror, Tension, and the American Ambassador’s Struggle to Avoid Pearl Harbor” and “Perfect: Don Larsen’s Miraculous World Series Game and the Men Who Made It Happen.”

Closing out the series in April will be Chicago-based writer Rowan Beard with her entertaining debut novel “The Divorcées,” which landed on numerous best-of-the-year lists for 2024. Her second novel, “Tenderness,” will be published in June 2026.



BEARD

For “The Divorcées,” Beard takes us back to the 1950s, when women had few ways to escape an unhappy marriage. One way out was to establish temporary residence at a Reno, Nev., “divorce ranch.” There, Beard’s heroine, Lois, spends her days riding horses and flirting with cowboys — until a new ranch resident opens her eyes to the possibilities of an indepen-

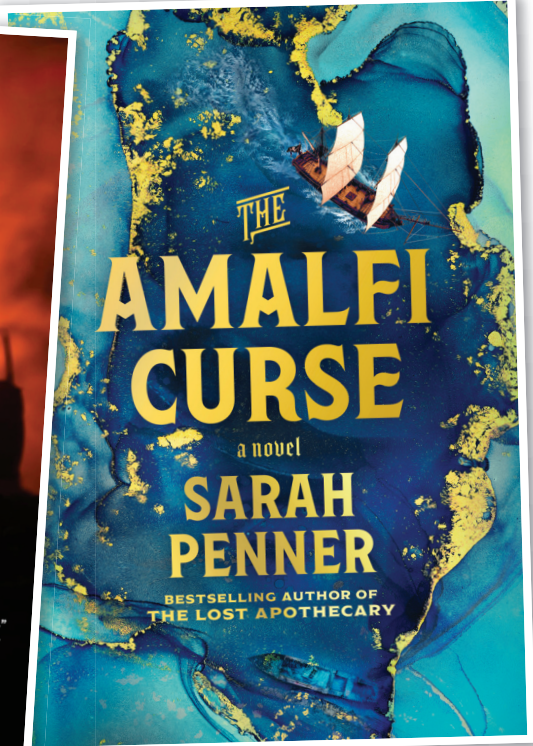


PAPER

dent life on her own terms.

Reviewers praised the novel’s “ageless themes” and the “poignant coming-of-age story,” calling it “moody, sexy and mysterious.”


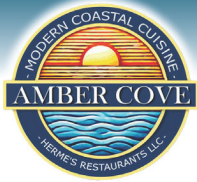
Attending the Author Spotlight Series at The Norris Center is an opportunity to spend the day in Naples’ Fifth Avenue South district, enjoying lunch and shopping before or after the event.



PENNER

Kelly E. Capolino of Downing-Frye Realty returns this year as the exclusive sponsor of the Author Spotlight Series.

Purchase tickets and become a member: Go to <https://collier-friends.org/>. If events sell out, a waiting list will be kept. Email Marlene Haywood, the Friends’ Program Director, at [mhaywood@collier-friends.org](mailto:mhaywood@collier-friends.org) or call 239-262-8135. ■



Amber Cove Restaurant, in partnership with Tenuta Torciano, proudly presents an exclusive Five Course Wine Dinner on

Wednesday, October 22<sup>nd</sup> | 6:00 pm

Discover the exquisite flavors of contemporary coastal cuisine, perfectly paired with premium wines from a centuries-old Tuscan estate. Indulge in this unforgettable dining experience for just **\$139 per person** (tax and tip not included).

To reserve: Sign in to [OpenTable.com](https://opentable.com), go to Amber Cove Naples, October 22, 6:00 pm

**I. Ceviche del Giorno**

Leche de tigre, cilantro, crispy shaved shallots, fresh radish, yuzu-avocado mousse, sea foam

Paired with: Vernaccia di San Gimignano - Crisp, floral, and mineral with a refined, gentle finish.

**II. Truffle Risotto**

Confit exotic mushrooms, Asiago, black truffle, truffle espuma, mushroom dust

Paired with: Chianti Classico Riserva "Godenzio" - Silky Sangiovese with red berry, spice, and earthy depth.

**III. Chilean Seabass**

Miso-glazed, cauliflower-tahini mousse, dashi-infused couscous, seaweed wakame, squid ink tuile

Paired with: Cavaliere co Bartolomeo - Supple Super Tuscans with ripe fruit, dark berry depth, and a graceful finish.

**V. Braised Angus Short Ribs**

Fermented garlic pomme purée, port and berry reduction, Hackleback caviar

Paired with: MMXX - Opulent Cabernet with cassis, cherry, cedar, and velvety tannins.



**V. Stracciatella Panna Cotta**



Grilled strawberries, pink peppercorn basil oil, micro basil, coconut gelato

Paired with: Rosé - Subtle red berry perfume

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