

Chicago-based novelist closes out Author Spotlight on April 9

Rowan Beard's literary heroines range from a 1950s divorcee in Reno to a 1970s cult survivor

BY FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY OF COLLIER COUNTY
SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

The spotlight turns to novelist Rowan Beard at the final author event of the 2025-26 season for the Friends of the Library of Collier County.

Beard — whose first two novels combine historical fiction and psychological twists — will speak and then sign her books at the Author Spotlight Series on Thursday afternoon, April 9.

Beard's debut novel, "The Divorcées," set at a 1950s Reno, Nev., divorce ranch, was praised by People magazine as a "rollicking thriller." Her second novel, "Tenderness," will be released in July.

The Friends of the Library of Collier County this year expanded the Author Spotlight Series to three events held at The Norris Center in Naples. Sarah Penner kicked off the series in October, with Naples-based author Lew Paper headlining in November.

Proceeds from events like these help the nonprofit Friends group raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for Collier County's public libraries. Seating for the Author Spotlight Series is general admission, and Beard's talk will be followed by a Q-and-A and a book signing. (See the info box for ticket information.)

Beard, based in Chicago, landed on numerous best-of-the-year lists for 2024 with "The Divorcées." In it, she takes

us back to the early 1950s, when one of the few ways a woman could escape an unhappy or abusive marriage was to establish temporary residence at a Reno "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 independent life on her own terms.

Reviewers praised the novel's "ageless themes" and the "poignant coming-of-age story," while calling its plot twists "moody, sexy and mysterious."

Beard's second novel, "Tenderness," will be published in July. Set in the 1970s at the wedding of a woman who has escaped from a notorious cult, it has been

described by one early reviewer as suspenseful, romantic, and an expert study in grief and vulnerability.

Her website is <https://www.rowanbeard.com/>

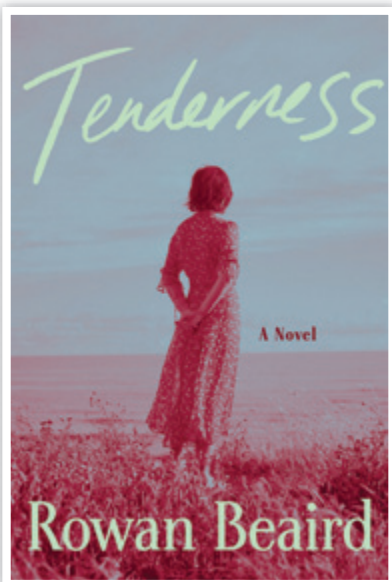
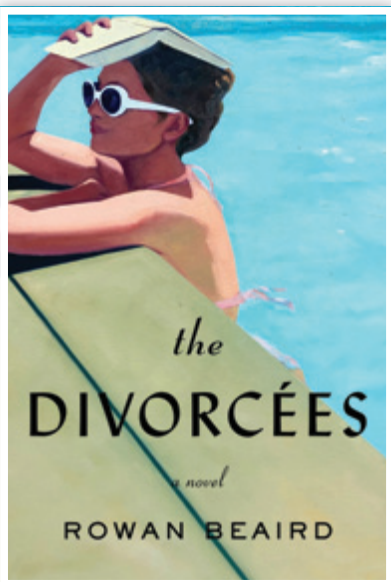
Because the Author Spotlight Series doesn't include a meal, it's an opportunity to spend the day in Naples' Fifth Avenue South district, enjoying lunch and shopping before or after the event.

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

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:** Rowan Beard, Thursday, April 9, at 2 p.m., followed by a book signing.
- **Cost:** Tickets for this final lecture of the season are \$55 for current members of the Friends; \$65 for nonmembers. All seating is general admission. Friends memberships begin at \$50 a year and also provide exclusive access and discounts to many other programs throughout the year.
- **Purchase tickets and become a member:** Go to collier-friends.org. Questions? Email Marlene Haywood, the Friends' operations and events manager, at mhaywood@collier-friends.org or call 239-262-8135. Rowan Beard's website rowanbeard.com.



Rowan Beard.

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