

MISSISSIPPI BOOK FESTIVAL

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MISSISSIPPI BOOK FESTIVAL DRAWS THOUSANDS TO ITS 2026 ANNUAL EVENT

JACKSON, MISS. – More than 9,135 book lovers and enthusiasts convened today at the 12th annual Mississippi Book Festival at the historic Mississippi State Capitol, Galloway Methodist Church, and First Baptist Jackson, a 15% increase in festival attendance from last year. Festival-goers heard from a packed author lineup including Saturday Night Live star and two-time Primetime Emmy Award winner Kate McKinnon, Mississippi's former Poet Laureate Beth Ann Fennelly, Booker Prize winner and MacArthur Fellow George Saunders, Clarksdale-born rapper and entrepreneur Rick Ross, #1 New York Times bestselling memoirist Belle Burden, and many more. Over the course of all festival events—including kids' programming in the Delta and Jackson, the festival reached 27,148 people, an increase from last year's total reach.

"More than 265 authors participated in Saturday's festival, including 46 official panels and workshops and greeting book lovers in Author's Alley," says Ellen Daniels, Mississippi Book Festival Executive Director. "We are always delighted and encouraged at the way locals, visitors, and book lovers from all over come out to enjoy our festival." In addition to a large slate of authors, the beloved Literary Lawn Party featured live music, food trucks, children's activities, book signings, and more.

On Friday, September 25th, visiting children's author Kate McKinnon spoke to 1,540 students at an in-person presentation at Thalia Mara Hall and to over 13,724 students through a live-streamed event as part of the festival's KidNote program. This program was streamed to 378 classrooms in 88 schools throughout 31 Mississippi counties. At the conclusion of the in-person session, each student was given their own complimentary copy of her book, *The Jungle of Carabanana* from the Millicent Quibb School of Etiquette for Young Ladies of Mad Science series, and schools that participated virtually across the state received books to be used in their school library.

On August 26th, children's author Matt Phelan spoke to nearly 2,000 children at the Bologna Performing

Arts Center in Cleveland, Mississippi, at the Mississippi Book Festival's third annual Delta KidNote. Phelan presented his books *Bartleby* and *Leave It to Plum!*, sharing stories and engaging with students throughout the event. Each student received a copy of one of Phelan's books to take home.

"Through our KidNote events, we celebrate the childlike wonder reading offers," says Daniels. "It's our mission to inspire a love of reading in young readers across our state. This shared passion of our funders, authors, educators, and organizers made each of these events possible. We are always delighted to see how the festival continues to grow and attract more authors and book lovers year after year."

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About Mississippi Book Festival

The **Mississippi Book Festival**, a nonprofit founded by literacy advocates, launched in August 2015 on the State Capitol grounds and continues to draw thousands to its annual Literary Lawn Party and book lovers' celebration. Hundreds of contemporary authors — national, regional and local — connect directly with fans and new readers, as invited guests on Official Panels that explore in-depth themes, or along Authors Alley, the festival's hub for self-published authors.

To learn more about the Mississippi Book Festival, visit msbookfestival.com or follow on Facebook, Instagram (@msbookfestival), or Twitter (@msbookfest).