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**General Fiction, Mystery, and Romance Finalist Reading in Colorado Springs**

May 13 – 4 p.m. at Sand Creek Library, 1821 S Academy Blvd, Colorado Springs, CO 80916

The Colorado Book Awards annually celebrates Colorado's outstanding literary achievement by commending the accomplishments of its authors, editors, illustrators, and photographers. Volunteer judges from across the state review submissions to select finalists and winners through a rigorous selection process.

Prior to the June 10 awards celebration in Colorado Springs, finalists will present a series of free public readings through June 3. The readings will be held at different Pikes Peak Library District locations throughout the Colorado Springs area. Finalists will read from their work and attendees can pose questions. Select finalist books will be available for purchase at the readings and through Poor Richard's Books & Gifts at <https://poorrichardsdowntown.com/#books>. Registration for this free event is available at <https://coloradohumanities.org/programs/colorado-book-awards/>.

**General Fiction Finalists**

*A Light in the Forest*

Melissa Payne

Vega Jones escapes an abusive relationship with nothing but her two-month-old baby and the van she grew up in. Her destination is an Ohio town her late vagabond mother left years ago. But even in this welcoming community, there's an undercurrent of something unsettled, talk of a tragedy that unfolded in the woods years ago, and a mystery connected to Vega in ways she couldn't have anticipated. For as long as she can remember, Melissa Payne has been telling stories in one form or another—from high school newspaper articles to a graduate thesis to blogging about marriage and motherhood. But she first learned the real importance of storytelling when she worked for a residential and day treatment center for abused and neglected children, where she wrote speeches and letters to raise funds. Melissa lives in Conifer.

*A Quick Trip to Moab*

Kevin T. Jones

Anti-wilderness protesters have taken over a portion of eastern Utah. Stan Watson, driving to Moab, stops by the highway to walk his dog Speck, and encounters a woman who begs him for help. When he offers Lily and her injured husband Frank a ride, they are confronted by armed men, and Stan is in for a nightmare he had not anticipated. Chased through the wildlands by ragtag extremists riding all-terrain vehicles, Stan, Lily, and Frank face dehydration, starvation, and murder at the hands of their pursuers. Kevin Jones is an archaeologist and writer who lives and works off-grid in the rugged canyon country of southwestern Colorado. He has a Ph.D. in anthropology and served as the Utah State Archaeologist for seventeen years. He is the author of *The Shrinking Jungle*, an anthropological novel, and *Standing on the Walls of Time*, essays about and inspired by Native American rock art (with photographs by Layne Miller). Kevin lives in Pleasant View.

*The Immortal King Rao*

Vauhini Vara

In a future in which the world is run by the Board of Corporations, King's daughter, Athena, reckons with his legacy—literally, for he has given her access to his memories, among other questionable gifts. With climate change raging, Athena has come to believe that saving the planet and its shareholders will require a radical act of communion—and so she sets out to tell the truth to the world's shareholders about King's childhood on a South Indian coconut plantation and his migration to the U.S. to study engineering in a world transformed by globalization. Vauhini Vara has worked as a Wall Street Journal technology reporter and as the business editor for The New Yorker. From a Dalit background, she is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and an O. Henry Prize winner. This is her first novel, and she lives in Fort Collins.

**Mystery Finalists**

*Aunt Dimity & the Enchanted Cottage*

Nancy Atherton

It's early May in the small English village of Finch and the air is crackling with excitement: a newcomer is about to move into Pussywillows, a riverside cottage with a romantic reputation. Will the cottage's newest resident prove yet again its enchanting ability to matchmake? But when Crispin Windle arrives, no one knows what to make of him: he repels every welcoming gesture and appears uninterested in being a part of the community. Nancy Atherton is the bestselling author of twenty-four Aunt Dimity mysteries. The first book in the series, *Aunt Dimity's Death*, was voted "One of the Century's 100 Favorite Mysteries" by the Independent Mystery Booksellers Association. She lives in Colorado Springs.

*The Chimera Club*

Chuck Greaves

It isn't entirely shocking that a man like film producer Ari Goldstone would be found murdered in his hotel suite given his reputation for sexual misconduct. The DNA test results point conclusively to disgraced financier Jimmy Kwan, the so-called "Chinese Bernie Madoff" and father of one of Goldstone's accusers. When Kwan's daughter Mae hires attorney Jack

MacTaggart to defend her father, Jack must solve the mystery of how the only possible suspect in a sensational murder cannot possibly have committed the crime. Chuck Greaves spent 25 years as an L.A. trial lawyer and has been a finalist in crime fiction for awards including the Lefty, Shamus, Macavity, and Audie, as well as the New Mexico-Arizona, Oklahoma, and Colorado Book Awards, the CAL Award in Fiction, and the Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction. Chuck lives in Cortez.

*Where Is Mary Bergen?*

Craig Marshall Smith

Peter Du Cane, a bestselling and alcoholic author, hires semi-retired private eye Frank Elgin hoping to reconnect with an Arizona State University classmate he hasn't seen in twenty years. Another non-linear entry in the author's *Mystery and Humor* series that combines obscure references with homages to his favorite authors, directors, and films. Emeritus professor of art, Craig Marshall Smith taught drawing at three universities in three states for over thirty years and has been an opinion columnist for 24 metro Denver weekly newspapers for nine years. He lives in Highlands Ranch.

### **Romance Finalists**

*All the Flowers of the Mountain*

Christina Holbrook

In a Paris art gallery, Dr. Michael Pearce comes upon a sculpture by the artist Katherine Morgan, which evokes memories of a summer many years earlier when Michael and Katherine–Kit–met as teenagers by a lake in New Hampshire. Michael's ambitions are ignited by this young woman, but Kit dreams of becoming an artist and her struggle with a mysterious event from the past leads to a deadly showdown by summer's end. A native of New York and the White Mountains of New Hampshire, Christina Holbrook has degrees in French and political theory, and her column "Lark Ascending" ran in the Summit Daily in Frisco from 2016 through 2020. More recently, her short fiction and essays have appeared in numerous literary journals and anthologies. Christina lives in Breckenridge.

*Hope is Built*

Davalynn Spencer

Mary McCrae is running from a planned future and flees the life her brother oversees on the dairy and heads West to Colorado only to learn her aunt and uncle have died and left their farm to her. But there's more on the land than orchards and good grazing, and others will do anything to get it. Neighbor Hugh Hutton doesn't have time for a woman who's after the same thing he is, and he doesn't have time for second chances. Especially not at love. As a child, Davalynn Spencer fell in love with horses. As a teen, she fell in love with a cowboy. That's how she became the wife and mother of professional rodeo bullfighters and an award-winning rodeo journalist. She is a two-time Will Rogers Medallion winner and lives in Cañon City.

*The Duke in Question*

Amalie Howard

The Duke of Thornbury, retired agent of the Crown, has never lost a target. In a flirty game of cat and mouse, a spy must keep his enemy close to unravel the secrets that threaten to tear them apart. Lady Bronwyn Chase is far from the paragon of society that her mother expects her to be, but as the duke gets closer to Bronwyn and the secrets she's keeping, he'll have to decide between the mysterious woman who calls to him, or his allegiance to the Crown. Amalie Howard is the author of the Publishers Weekly bestseller, *The Beast of Beswick*, which Entertainment Weekly touted as "bursting with shrewd banter, inventively sexy interludes, and emotion with a capital E." She is the co-author of the #1 bestsellers in regency romance and Scottish historical romance, *My Hellion*, *My Heart* and *What A Scot Wants*, and has also penned several award-winning young adult novels. Of Indo-Caribbean descent, she has written articles on multicultural fiction for The Portland Book Review and Ravishly. She lives in Fort Collins.

### **Finalist Reading Schedule**

May 20 – Creative and General Nonfiction at East Library, 5550 N Union Blvd, Colorado Springs, CO 80918

May 27 – Anthology, Literary Fiction, and Poetry at Library 21c, 1175 Chapel Hills Dr, Colorado Springs, CO 80919

June 3 – Science Fiction/Fantasy and Thriller at Rockrimmon Library, 832 Village Center Dr, Colorado Springs, CO 80919

### **2023 Finalist Celebration and Winners Announcement**

Saturday, June 10 at 4 p.m.

Penrose House Garden Pavilion

1661 Mesa Avenue, Colorado Springs, CO 80906

\$30 event tickets on sale at <https://coloradohumanities.org/product/2023-colorado-book-awards-celebration/>

### **About Colorado Humanities & Center for the Book**

Colorado Humanities is the only Colorado organization exclusively dedicated to supporting humanities education for adults and children statewide. Celebrating its 49th year and its 19th year as host for the Colorado Center for the Book, Colorado Humanities, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, partners with hundreds of community partners across the state, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Library of Congress Center for the Book, the Smithsonian Institution, and the national award-winning educational nonprofit Helps Education Fund.

### **About Pikes Peak Library District**

Pikes Peak Library District (PPLD) provides everyone with access to resources and opportunities so people can thrive and connect. The Library cultivates spaces for belonging, personal growth, and strong communities via 16 facilities, mobile library services, and a large online hub of resources. It is an internationally recognized system of public libraries serving a

population of nearly 700,000 across 2,070 square miles in El Paso County, Colorado. Learn more at [ppld.org](http://ppld.org).

**About Poor Richard's Books and Gifts**

Poor Richard's Books and Gifts is a full-service new and used bookstore that was founded in 1975 as Poor Richard's Used Paperbacks. It was the first in the Poor Richard's family of businesses and remains an anchor and draw for both our loyal regulars and new customers who are always delighted to make the discovery of our home-grown, Indie bookstore.

For more information, images, recording clips, and interviews, please contact Mary Hickey at [mary@coloradohumanities.org](mailto:mary@coloradohumanities.org) or 303.894.7951 x19.

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