Headliners, Poetry Readings, and Genre Panels Highlight Successful 2019 Oklahoma Book Festival

A rainy morning and a day where the wind came sweeping down the plains didn’t stop a record crowd from turning out for the second Oklahoma Book Festival on Saturday, September 21.

Festival vendor Factor 110 estimates more than 3,000 individuals headed to the Oklahoma City Boathouse District to hear the 100+ presenters from Oklahoma and across the nation as they discussed their latest books—an increase from last year’s estimate of more than 2,500 in attendance.

Headliners were the big draw, with a total of 427 people attending sessions in the Ida Sutton Williams Headliner Tent to hear presentations on popular current titles, from Scott Pelley’s Truth Worth Telling, to WK Stratton’s book on the movie The Wild Bunch, to Mystery writer Anne Hillerman’s latest work, The Tale Teller.

Almost 300 individuals stopped by the Poetry Pavillion during the day, where 15 local and regional poets—including Oklahoma Poet Laureate Jeanetta Calhoun Mish—read their works. More than 120 attendees took part in the two Inspirational panels, which highlighted both fictional and non-fictional works.

Other genre panels featured at the festival included Romance, Young Adult Fantasy, History, Science, Nature, and Bilingual Children’s Books.

Veteran Journalist and 60 Minutes Correspondent Steve Pelley shares stories from his book Truth Worth Telling. More than 150 were in the audience to hear Pelley for the festival’s first Headliner session. Honorary Co-Chair Jane Jayroe [inset] recruited Pelley for the festival.
On the Young Adult side, 105 tweens, teens, and adults turned out to see Brandon Mull’s presentation on his insanely popular Dragon-watch books, part of his Fablehaven series.

Thanks to funding from the Oklahoma City Community Foundation, 74 middle schoolers and their chaperones from Bristow, Cleveland, and Okeene were bused in to take part in the festivities. Each young person received a free t-shirt, a free book, and a voucher to have lunch at one of the festival’s food trucks. Some of the lucky young people had their photo taken with writer Alton Carter, author of the popular The Boy Who Carried Bricks and his new work, The Boy Who Survived.

Some 600 young people made superhero capes, masks, shields, and kites in the Children’s Craft Tent during the day, and another 300 visited the Pioneer Library System’s Mobile Maker Space.

The Festival’s Vendor Village and Food Truck zones were popular throughout the day, with approximately 700 individuals shopping the booths and an estimated 1,500 folk ordering drinks and meals.

Feedback has been uniformly positive, and we’re thrilled the event was another success. We’ll leave you with a look at more numbers from the festival, and a super “Thank You!” from the Oklahoma Department of Libraries to our outstanding volunteers and generous sponsors!
Oklahoma Book Festival
By the Numbers

17 sponsors and 3 media sponsors

110 authors, poets, and illustrators made presentations or participated on panels

42 — Number of individual author presentations and panels

15 — Number of poets reading at the Poetry Pavilion

2,059 — Total attendance at all author presentation tents and stages

973 — Total attendance for all children's activities (craft tent, maker space, and storytime tent)

4,000 est — Total attendance at all venues (author tents, poetry pavilion, children's activities, Vendor Village, book sale and signing sessions, and food trucks)

$19,000+ — Dollar amount of books sold by festival vendor Full Circle Books

360 — Number of complimentary food vouchers used at food trucks by authors, moderators, volunteers, and young guests from three middle schools

11,600 — Responses on Facebook Event Page for the Book Festival

4 (at least) — Number of times the sign for the Frank Keating Tween/YA Lawn was blown over by the wind

[from top to bottom] Betty Falato, on the left, moderated the Revisiting the Past panel featuring Randy Krehbiel (author of Tulsa, 1921: Reporting a Massacre) and Darnella Davis (author of Untangling a Red, White, and Black Heritage: A Personal History of the Allotment Era). • What could be better than getting your picture taken with a famous Oklahoman? Frank Keating—former Governor, author, and Festival Honorary Co-Chair—poses with a fan. Mike Wimmer, on left, illustrated Keating’s book Will Rogers: Our American Legend. • The book sale and book signings in the Devon Boathouse were a reader’s dream. Full Circle Books was book vendor for the festival.
What They’re Saying …

“I attend 20–30 book festivals annually, and this was among the most well-organized and enjoyable that I have attended, so you should be very proud of your amazing work.” — Presenter Jacob M. Appel, author of Who Says You’re Dead?

“Just wanted you to know that I had the time of my life! Thank you so much for allowing me to be a part of the festival.” — Presenter Alton Carter, author of The Boy Who Survived

“One father and his young adult daughter made a four hour drive to come because the daughter grew up reading all the books in my Christy Miller series. (The Series has 46 titles so that’s a lot of reading!) The daughter cried as I signed her book and she told me the impact the stories had on her choices during her teen years. I cried, too.” — Presenter Robin Jones Gunn, author of Becoming Us: A Novel

“From my (and other authors’) perspective, your Oklahoma Book Festival was a marvelous event. Other than the uncooperative morning weather, it was as well organized and managed as any I’ve ever attended.” — Presenter Ron Franscell, author of Alice and Gerald: A Homicidal Love Story

“Thanks for including me in your big dream to have an event that benefits so many people and shares our love of books!” — Honorary Co-Chair Jane Jayroe Gamble, author of Practice: Unleashing the Power of Faith

The 2019 Oklahoma Book Festival was made possible thanks to these generous sponsors

Full Circle Books  Jane Jayroe Gamble  Barbara Green  Frank Keating  Herman & LaDonna Meinders  Muscogee (Creek) Nation  Loves  Pioneer Library System  Gene Rainbolt  Oklahoma History Center  Walmart