

Books Sandwiched In 2023 Speaker Bios



Jonathan Coffey

Jon Coffey was born 72 years ago in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He grew up in Miami, Florida and has lived in many places over the years, practicing life as a parish priest in the Episcopal Church. He is married to Julie Gibson and they have two children, Kate, an acupuncturist and Spencer, deceased. He and Julie have two grandchildren.

As a native of the South, Jon has learned more than he knew he did not know since moving to Beaufort County in 2015. The period of our history we often describe as “Reconstruction” is a topic of particular interest. The book *Second: Race and Guns in a Fatally Unequal America* by Carol Anderson has helped Jon understand better how/why we have such an obsession with firearms in the USA.



Carla Damron

Carla Damron is a social worker, advocate and author whose last novel, *The Stone Necklace* (about grief and addiction), won the 2017 Women's Fiction Writers Association Star Award for Best Novel and was selected the One Community Read for Columbia SC. Damron is also the author of the Caleb Knowles mystery novels and has published numerous short stories, essays, and op-eds.

Damron holds an MSW and an MFA. Her careers as a social worker and writer are intricately intertwined; all of her novels explore social issues like addiction, homelessness, mental illness, and human trafficking. In her spare time, Damron volunteers with the League of Women Voters (chapter vice-president), Sisters in Crime, Palmetto Chapter (President), and Mutual Aid Midlands.

Damron's latest novel, *The Orchid Tattoo*, uses crime fiction to delve into the complex topic of human trafficking, a horrific crime affecting thousands of victims around the world—including her native South Carolina.



Joe DeVito

Joe and his wife, Dawn, moved to the area in 1986, and they purchased a home in Port Royal and have raised two boys in that home and still live there.

After working for a local plumber for 2 years, Joe took a job with the City of Beaufort Utilities Department, which later merged with BJWSA and retired as the Director of Operations in 2017, after 29 plus years.

After retirement, he moved to the private sector, still working with utilities, and is employed with Badger Meter Inc. as Manager of Utility Solutions.

After 20 years of being involved with Town, County, and State boards and commissions, He decided to serve his community by running for Town of Port Royal Mayor and was elected in 2019.



Rebecca Dwight Bruff

Rebecca Bruff heard the story of Robert Smalls on her first visit to South Carolina. She was so captivated that she left her job and moved across the country to research and write *Trouble the Water*, a novel. Bruff earned her Bachelor's degree in education (Texas A&M) and Master and Doctorate degrees in theology (Southern Methodist University). In 2017, she was a scholarship recipient for the prestigious Key West Literary Seminar. She volunteers at the Pat Conroy Literary Center in Beaufort, South Carolina. She's published non-fiction, plays a little tennis, travels when she can, and loves life in the Lowcountry with her exuberant golden retriever. Learn more at rebeccabruff.com.



Jayne Violette

Jayne Violette is a professor of Communication Studies at the University of South Carolina Beaufort, where she teaches a broad variety of human communication courses, including storytelling and family communication. A native of rural Somerset County, Pennsylvania, Dr. Violette received her PhD from the University of Kentucky in Lexington and has been involved in higher education for over 30 years, having taught at four different universities.

While her academic interests revolve primarily around instructional communication research and theory, her love of family, for small town dynamics, and unique personalities she encounters in daily life is reflected in her reading preferences, including everything Anne Tyler has ever written. A firm believer that truth is stranger than fiction, Dr. Violette and her husband (Jeff) relocated to Beaufort County in 2014 as she recovered from advanced stage breast cancer, desiring healing that only salt water and the beauty of the Lowcountry can bring. The Violettes also enjoy spending time with their daughter, Alexis, and son-in-law, Emmanuel, who reside in Charleston, SC.



Greg Schulte

Ambassador (retired) Gregory L. Schulte had a 34-year career of public service in national security and international relations.

Greg was U.S. representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations in Vienna from 2005 to 2009, helping find Iran in violation of its nuclear safeguards. Between 1998 and 2005, Greg had three tours in the White House, advising on the Kosovo crisis and as Executive Secretary of the National Security Council. Greg was at NATO Headquarters from 1992 to 1998, directing nuclear policy and the Bosnia Task Force.

Greg ended his career on the faculty of the National War College, teaching strategy to our nation's next generation of military and civilian leaders.

Greg retired in 2014 and moved with his wife Nancy to a community near Beaufort, South Carolina. In 2017, with the trail name Billy Goat and the support of his trail angel Nancy, he thru-hiked the 2,189-mile Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine. In 2019, he and their daughter hiked the 211-mile John Muir Trail in California's High Sierra.

An Eagle Scout, Greg graduated magna cum laude from the University of California at Berkeley and earned a Masters in Public Affairs from Princeton University.



Carrie B. Major

Carrie was born **and** reared on St. Helena Island and in the city of Beaufort. She is married to Frank Major for 50 years (June 1971) and is the mother of 4 adult children, Stanley, Jason, Ava, Brandon. She also reared her niece, Kerri Janae. Carrie has 15 grandchildren.

Carrie was educated in the Beaufort County school system. She received an Associate degree in Business from USC-Beaufort in 1978; a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Psychology from Park University in 1992 and a Master of Arts degree in Counseling from Webster University in 2002. Carrie is a License Baccalaureate Social Worker (LBSW), a Certified Addictions Counselor II (CAC II), Former Family Group Conferencing Coordinator with C.O.S.Y. and SC DSS and Former ADSAP-PRI Facilitator for Beaufort County Alcohol & Drug Abuse Department.

Carrie retired (2008) from Beaufort County Alcohol & Drug Abuse Department. Carrie has held various positions that helped shape her career of service to children, families and community. Twenty nine of these years were working in State government. She has held positions in counseling and social work and teaching and as an Adjunct Professor at Wheelock College. She has received numerous awards and recognition and served on many community boards.

Carrie is a member of Bethesda Christian Fellowship serving as a Minister of the Gospel since 1992, (title is "Prophetess"), Sunday school teacher, and other ministries.

Carrie is a counselor, motivational speaker and workshop/seminar facilitator who has given her time and talents to help others, especially youth and young adults.



Wanda Mayse

Wanda Mayse serves as the Deputy Director, Quality Assurance Coordinator, and Residential Director of the Beaufort County Department of Disability and Special Needs (BCDSN). Since 2007, Mayse has directed the residential program there that provides support for 50 individuals to live independently in their communities. Mayse previously served as Program Director at Brynn Marr Hospital in the Acute Inpatient Service Department. Before that, she worked for the Onslow County Mental Health and Pride in North Carolina, where she helped people of all ages with mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, and behavioral disorders.

Mayse earned her Master of Counseling degree from Webster University and bachelor's degree in Speech Pathology and Audiology from Columbia College. She also earned certification from the South Carolina Human Services Provider Executive Leadership Academy. Mayse is a member of the American Counseling Association and the South Carolina Counseling Association. Wanda Mayse is also a member of The Beaufort County Youth Conference, Beaufort Arts Council, Gullah Kinfolk traveling Theater, Fellowship Concert Choir, Beaufort Mass Choir, Lowcountry Diversity Coalition, and Union Baptist Church.