

## Festival showcases the written word

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Hendersonville's newest festival is a unique creation that won't offer rides, games or funnel cakes - only words.



MIKE DIRKS/TIMES-NEWS

Tom McCain, co-chair with the Blue Ridge Book and Author Showcase, speaks during a press conference at BRCC.

Organizers held a press conference Tuesday to announce the details of the Blue Ridge Book and Author Showcase, a two-day festival planned for May 8 and 9 at the Technology and Education Development Center at Blue Ridge Community College.

The event will feature more than 50 authors and their works as well as displays, book signings, group conversations, readings, socializing and a meet-and-greet reception. Organizers hailed the showcase as a “festival and convocation in celebration of authorship, creative writing and the joy of reading.”

Thirty-minute sessions will be held Saturday, May 9 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Topics will include poetry, fiction and non-fiction books and plays, Appalachian literature, character portrayal, aspiring writers, historical fiction and environmental themes. Fifteen presenters are currently on the schedule.

Sharyn McCrumb, best-selling New York Times author of the Appalachian “Ballad” novels, will be the keynote speaker.

Award-winning author Robert Morgan of Hendersonville, known for his historical novels, short stories and books of poetry, will serve as honorary chairman and as a presenter.

Visitors will benefit from “one-on-one, hand-to-hand conversations” with authors, said Tom McCain, the showcase’s Executive Committee co-chair.

The nationally-known authors will read and sign their work, and answer questions such as where they find their inspiration and how to get published, he added.

“This, I think, is going to be a fantastic success,” said Ken Butcher, who represented the Henderson County Board of Travel and Tourism, one of the event’s four principal sponsors.

Henderson County is a culturally-minded place that supports the arts, he explained, and the event will be held in the brand new, beautiful Technology and Education Development Center.

In regard to travel and tourism, the event is a great idea because when showcase visitors aren’t at the center, they will be out in the county spending money, he added.

“Together we’re going to make this a year-after-year success,” Butcher said.

David Hutto, technology director for Blue Ridge Community College, which is another of the event’s four major sponsors, said the showcase will be a hit mostly because of the vision and planning of the organizers.

As a comprehensive community college, they are blessed to have the event on campus, he added, especially since writing is a large part of what they are about.

“Our mission statement goes hand-in-hand with what is going on with the Book and Author Showcase,” said committee member Patsy Farmer Jones, who serves on the Henderson County Education Foundation, another principal sponsor. The Times-News is the fourth principal sponsor.

A former fourth-grade teacher who taught students how to write, Jones said that a word of encouragement from authors such as Morgan would open doors for youngsters.

Executive Committee Co-chair Bob Greenwald said he will be contacting community businesses and organizations to see if they would like to become a sponsor of the event, which is free to the public except for the meet-and-greet reception.

“We recognize that fundraising is not as easy these days,” he said. “We have our work cut out for us.”

Detailed information including a tentative schedule is available at [www.blueridgebookfest.org](http://www.blueridgebookfest.org). Greenwald can be contacted at (828) 698-1550.