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## Book festival set to unite authors, Fox Cities readers

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### **Abstract:**

Pitts, a longtime syndicated columnist from the Miami Herald who writes frequently and passionately on topics of race, will present two writing workshops on Monday morning at the University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley and then will give a presentation on his latest novel, "Grant Park," at 6:30 p.m. at the school's Perry Hall.

### **Full text:**

It's billed as a celebration of books, but it's bound to have appeal far beyond those with the heaviest wear and tear on their library cards.

The 2016 Fox Cities Book Festival kicks off on Monday, bringing readers in the Fox Valley together with more than 60 authors over seven days.

Among this year's festival highlights will be three appearances by Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist and author Leonard Pitts. Also, David Sheff, author of the No. 1 bestseller "Beautiful Boy: a Father's Journey Through His Son's Addiction," will offer four presentations.

Pitts, a longtime syndicated columnist from the Miami Herald who writes frequently and passionately on topics of race, will present two writing workshops on Monday morning at the University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley and then will give a presentation on his latest novel, "Grant Park," at 6:30 p.m. at the school's Perry Hall.

Sheff's "Beautiful Boy" was the selection for this year's Fox Cities Reads, an annual effort spearheaded by local libraries to get as many people in the community as possible reading and discussing a particular title. He will speak at noon Monday at Perry Hall and will follow that up with talks at 6:30 p.m. Monday at Little Chute High School, 10 a.m. Tuesday at the Appleton Public Library and 1 p.m. Tuesday at the Elisha D. Smith Public Library in Menasha.

Ruth Bloedow, co-chair of the festival, said it's an engaging week with more offered than any one person could take in. There are chances to learn about the craft of writing. Some presentations will move their audiences while others will entertain.

"I think we have something for almost everyone," Bloedow said

The ninth annual festival is spread across the Fox Cities with venues ranging from libraries to schools to businesses. A number of writers from Wisconsin and the Fox Cities will give local flavor to the week-long lineup.

Authors say the festival experience is just as valuable for the writer as it is for the reader.

Liam Callanan, a Milwaukee novelist, said that while writing is often thought of as a one-way form of communication, he's always fascinated to learn what readers took from the experience. They often find things the writer didn't recognize were there, and he considers that interaction part of making a story complete.

"Community has been a part of storytelling from the very beginning," he said.

Abby Frucht, an Oshkosh novelist who has been a frequent guest of the Fox Cities Book Festival, said opportunities to converse with readers always leave her with a deeper appreciation of her craft.

The interaction reminds her that everyone has a story, "and that to spend my days as a writer and storyteller is a privilege and a responsibility."

This year's festival will start fast, with Pitts offering two Monday morning sessions on writing at the University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley. Sheff will follow with a noon presentation on understanding drug use at noon in UWFox's Perry Hall.

That's the front end of what should be a diverse lineup. The week will include poets, photographers and

children's authors, presentations will span genres from fantasy to nonfiction, and talks will explore a range from comics to kitchens and history to mystery.

Fiction authors will read from their works.

Bloedow said the event has grown steadily in participation as well as reputation, noting that organizers have gotten inquiries from authors based on the positive feedback from other authors.

She said a passion for reading in the Fox Cities keeps the festival vibrant.

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If you go

**What:** 2016 Fox Cities Book Festival

**When:** Opens Monday and runs through April 24

**Where:** Multiple libraries, the University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley and other locations throughout the Fox Cities

**Highlight No. 1:** Leonard Pitts, novelist and Pulitzer Prize winning columnist, will present "The Craft of Writing" at 9 a.m. Monday at the University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley, Room 1551. He'll present "The Craft of Fiction Writing at 10 a.m. Monday in UWFox Room 1553. Pitts also will read from and discuss his new novel, "Grant Park," at 6:30 p.m. Monday in Perry Hall at UWFox.

**Highlight No. 2:** David Sheff, bestselling author of the 2016 Fox Cities Reads book, "Beautiful Boy," will present "Understanding Drug Use: Ending America's

Greatest Tragedy" at noon Monday in Perry Hall at UWFox. Sheff also will put on presentations at 6:30 p.m.

Monday at Little Chute High School; at 10 a.m. Tuesday at the Appleton Public Library and at 1 p.m. Tuesday at Menasha Public Library.

**Highlight No. 3:** Michael Perry, a bestselling author who writes about his life in rural Wisconsin, will present "An afternoon with Michael Perry" at noon Wednesday

in Perry Hall at UWFox.

**More details:** For a full schedule of events, visit [foxcitiesbookfestival.org](http://foxcitiesbookfestival.org).

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