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*The Riverdale Park Arts Council educates and works for the understanding and appreciation of the arts for the Riverdale Park community and its residents.*

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## **ArtsFest2014**

# **Writers Row: An Opportunity to Meet Local Authors**

Nearly 35 years ago when his first book was being published, Joel Garreau, a young national news editor at *The Washington Post* told colleagues “writing a book is the closest a man will ever come to giving birth to a baby.” Within weeks, Garreau delivered *The Nine Nations of North America*, which describes how the continent behaves not so much like 50 states or three countries, but nine separate and powerful civilizations or economies. It was a homerun for the author and the first of many of Garreau’s books embraced by readers, marketers, political operatives and academics.

While penning a book is a monumental task, when it’s done writers take great delight in talking about their characters, about their stories and the process of getting published. ArtsFest2014, the seventh annual arts and music festival hosted by Riverdale Park Arts Council in Town Center on Sunday, May 4, 11 am to 5 pm, offers a rare opportunity for readers to meet and greet local authors who will sign their books and tell them the behind the scene stories of their works.

Sometimes writers get inspiration when they discover a hole in a story told by a famous author. “When I was a high school student at Christchurch School, a private Episcopalian boarding school located on the banks of the Rappahannock River in Middlesex County, Virginia, I fell in love Dr. Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes adventures,” says **Samuel Williams, Jr.**, a 55-year-old African American journalist and grant writer based in Riverdale Park, MD. “However, I noticed there were only two black characters ever mentioned in any of the adventures. I was also concerned the only black male character to appear, Steve Dixie, was depicted as a rogue and grifter. I decided I would write a Holmes adventure that would give Dixie’s character some positive, redeeming value and I believe I was successful in doing so in the book, *Anomalous: The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes featuring Jack Johnson and Alphonse Capone.*”

Williams, the first African American writer to ever author a major Sherlock Holmes novel, will be among a half-dozen authors at ArtsFest2014 discussing their work.

Others appearing on the ArtsFest2014 Writers Row include novelist **Richard Morris**. Born in Pittsburgh, raised in Cleveland, Morris brings his characters to life in Maryland and primarily in Prince George’s County which he renamed “Patuxent County” in one of his recent books, *Well Considered*. The novel’s main character, Ron Watkins, looks into the 1907 mob murder of his great-grandfather on a Maryland tobacco plantation. Morris, of Hyattsville, has written

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several books including *Cologne No. 10 For Men*, a novel on the Vietnam war which Writer's Digest said "The writing crackles with authenticity."

Native Washingtonian **Carrolyn Pichet**, who worked for 20 years with INTERPOL, Department of Justice, and in 2009 retired as a Management and Program Analyst with the Quality Control & Standards Unit, Language Services Section with the FBI, is now an author and poet. She enjoys participating in speech and writing contests. Her second book, *Growing Up in the Nation's Capital: We Made It, But It Took an Entire Village*, was published last year.

As a boy, **Carmen Garner** was confronted by every conceivable human ill: poverty, drugs, sickness, violence, and racism. He moved 37 times, between relatives in the projects as well as foster care homes. He lost all of those he held most dear to AIDS, crack cocaine and incarceration. From this, Garner drew not despair, but strength. Confronted by ignorance, he turned to knowledge, the first in his family to go to college. As a man, he grew to discover that his battle hardened character could be used as a tool to reach out and connect with young people. As a public school teacher in inner-city Washington DC, Garner learned the power of his hard earned perspective, recognizing the raw potential in his students, and teaching them, above all things, that they have worth and talent and ability. These aspects were made sacred in his classroom. Garner's remarkable journey is told in words, pictures and paintings. He is now a father, brother, teacher who turned disadvantage into advantage. Through the experience he learned empathy, humility and understand his ability, through his book, the capacity to change lives.

Also joining the mix will be 21-year-old writer and poet **Meg Eden** who's already published two books of poetry, *Rotary Phones & Facebook* a chapbook of nearly 40 Poems, and *Your Son*, 10 poems about her relationship with her father. Eden is also working on a young adult fiction novel called *Joannie Dark* about a young girl who starts a chess club at her school.

Town Center@the MARC Station is at 4650 Queensbury Road in downtown Riverdale Park.

*Contributions for RPAC maybe tax deductible through the group's relationship with the Hyattsville Community Development Corporation, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. ArtsFest2014 is made possible by the generous support of the Town of Riverdale Park, Mayor Vernon Archer and the Town Council, the Riverdale Lions Club, Douglas Development Corp., Michael D. Herman, Esq. & Associates, Ed Ballute & The Shingle King, Yorke Partners, Chambers Funeral Home, Stuart Eisenberg, Town Center Market, Dumm's Pizza & Subs, Robert Thompson and the Civil Air Patrol, College Park Composite Squadron, and all the on-ground volunteers.*