

## Writers Festival brings big-name authors to Rancho Mirage

**Sandie Newton** NBCares

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We all know how powerful the written word is. But did you know there are more libraries in the United States than there are McDonald's? We are a culture that loves to read, and it's that very passion that fuels the popular **Rancho Mirage Writers Festival**. The upcoming event, being held Jan. 29-31, is now in its seventh year. Last year, the nonprofit hosted 45 writers and more than 1,000 readers.

It was just a dream seven years ago, but **Helene Galen** and **Jamie Kabler** had been inspired. They had been to the famed writers festival in Sun Valley, Idaho, and knew immediately that they wanted to model a similar event in the desert with proceeds benefiting the community.

"We were so impressed with the concept of having writers discuss their craft with an audience that we decided the desert was the perfect place to host a similar festival," Kabler says. "We are so grateful the community has embraced our festival. Our community loves to read, and they love to discuss what they've read."

Kabler and Galen now proudly partner with the award-winning **Rancho Mirage Library and Observatory**, and all extra proceeds from the festival go back to support programs and improvements there. "We have one of the best libraries you'll find anywhere," Kabler says, "and we are so happy to help raise money for improvements and introduce newcomers to it. The authors are impressed, too."

The festival uses proceeds to also fund special gifts to the community like the recently installed short story dispensary, which instantly delivers a quick read. They have installed one at the library and one at the main **Eisenhower Health** campus to entertain visitors who may need a distraction while waiting to be treated or waiting for friends or family members.

"A free, quick one-to-three-minute short story is immediately dispensed from the machine," Kabler says. "We think it's better than the old magazines usually left out — and what could be better than reading a short story?"

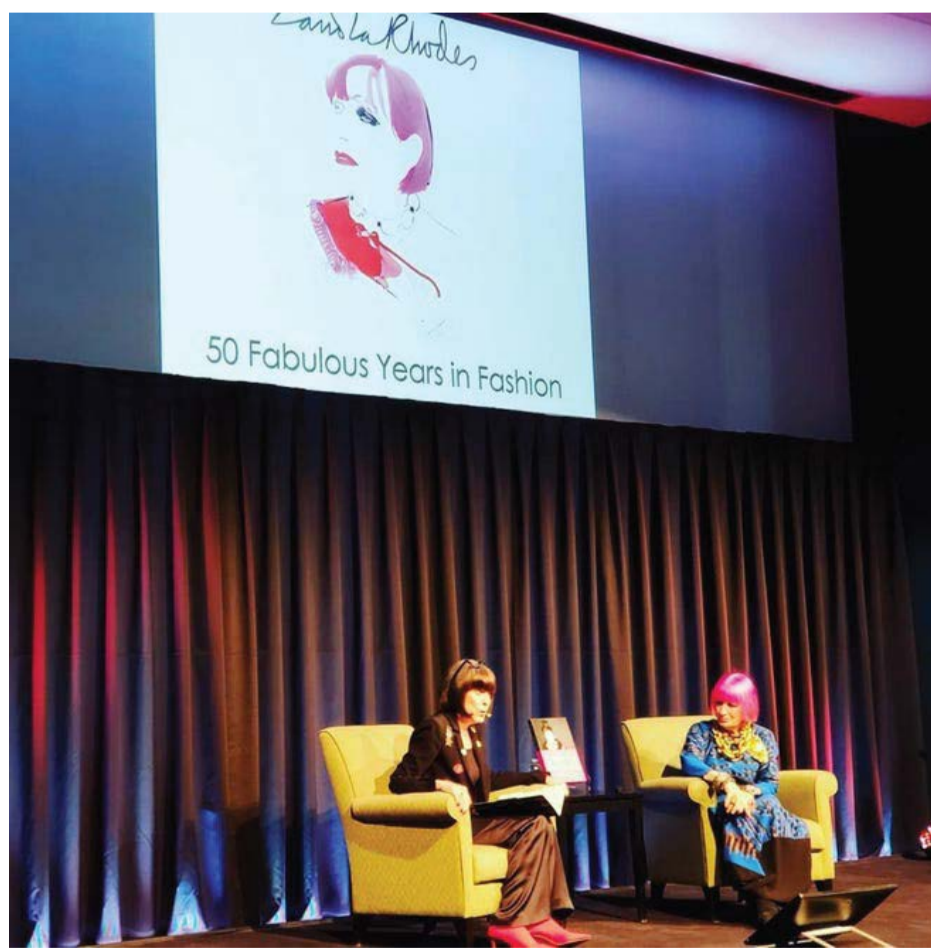
The creators also host many free opportunities throughout the year with world renowned authors. And this year, there is a powerful weekend featuring two popular writers, **Alexandra Fuller** and **Karine Jean-Pierre**, who will discuss their books Feb. 6 and 7 respectively.



Jamie Kabler demonstrates the short story dispenser for Sandie Newton *NBCares*



Author Harlan Coben spoke in April 2019. *NBCares*



Susan Stein speaks with designer Zandra Rhodes. *NBCares*

And there is a fabulous bonus to attending any of the writers events: each audience member receives a free copy of the featured book.

All this love for the written word attracts authors and fans from around the world and all to benefit our local library. That's a great story in itself.