

University of Dayton

eCommons

---

Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Blog

Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop

---

4-30-2024

## The Woodstock of Writers' Workshops

Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.udayton.edu/ebww\\_blog](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/ebww_blog)

---

### eCommons Citation

Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop, "The Woodstock of Writers' Workshops" (2024). *Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Blog*. 12.

[https://ecommons.udayton.edu/ebww\\_blog/12](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/ebww_blog/12)

This Blog is brought to you for free and open access by the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Blog by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact [mschlangen1@udayton.edu](mailto:mschlangen1@udayton.edu), [ecommons@udayton.edu](mailto:ecommons@udayton.edu).

# The Woodstock of Writers' Workshops

 [udayton.edu/blogs/erma/2024/04/woodstock\\_of\\_writers\\_workshops.php](https://udayton.edu/blogs/erma/2024/04/woodstock_of_writers_workshops.php)



Tuesday April 30, 2024

The 2024 Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop received the highest mark in its history, with pleas to "keep the eclipse," the open mic night — and the snacks.

"The camaraderie, the positivity, the support, the laughter, the joy: it's perfect," wrote one attendee on a survey rating the 2024 conference. "I was so impressed by how much the workshop leaders had prepared for us, how approachable they were, how accessible they were," she wrote. "I could not be more impressed that you had a solar eclipse that I got to see by staying until Monday. That really is going the extra mile to ensure a thrilling experience for attendees."

A number of returning attendees said this was the best of all the workshops they've attended — and the survey bears that out. Approximately 54 percent of attendees completed the online survey and gave the overall workshop a 9.46 score (out of 10), the highest score ever.

The workshop's cost vs. value and the opportunity to network also netted scores greater than 9. Approximately 85 percent said the knowledge and connections they gained will cover the full cost of attending or far more than cover the cost. Approximately 85 percent say they'd definitely return in 2026 or highly consider it.

Among the hundreds of write-in responses: “Having attended this conference four times in person and once virtually, I would like to say that it’s always wonderful, but this time it was definitely a cut above,” wrote one attendee. “The speakers were very accomplished in their field and offered a variety of perspectives and expertise. ...This is absolutely the best bang for your buck writers experience on the planet.”

Here's a glimpse of what writers had to say about the keynote slate and the emcee:

**Anna Quindlen in conversation with Marsha Bonhart:** “It felt like we were sitting in our living room chatting with Anna Quindlen. Marsha Bonhart was a seasoned interviewer: relaxed, friendly and curious.” And this: “Anna Quindlan rocks! So wise and kind.”

**Zibby Owens:** Her energy is electric, her message is inspirational, and her passion is infectious!”

**Beth Lapedes:** “Be brave. Be daring. Manifest. Desire. Make peace with your past. She was so genuine and gave us great insight into her world of music and comedy.”

**Jacquelyn Mitchard:** “Loved her. Told it like it is, but with gentleness and humor.”

**Wade Rouse:** “Extraordinary in every way. We laughed, we cried, we sang and laughed some more. This is what Erma is all about.”

**Leighann Lord:** “She had it all: charisma, authenticity, knowledge of the speakers/writing scene, humor and grace. Great emcee!”

Attendees also appreciated both the new and traditional features of the workshop. As the gathering’s inaugural **Erma Poet Laureate**, Los Angeles poet Barbara Fant drew a standing ovation after she performed her original poem, “For Erma: when the real writers come back home.”

“I’ve done nothing but rave about her writing and performance,” one attendee said. “When she was reading her poem, I was trying hard not to cry. When she finished, I looked around the dinner table and every person sitting there was trying not to cry.”

Despite some initial technical difficulties at the beginning of “**Open Mic Night at Erma with Kathy Kinney and Cindy Ratzlaff**,” attendees appreciated the opportunity to read their work before an audience. “To me, there is one word to summarize this entire workshop: VOICE. So many attendees want to have their stories told. Or learn techniques to better tell their stories. I think listening to other people tell their stories, not just presenters, helps us all,” one attendee observed.

For the early risers, “**Erma Made Me Do It!**” helped prepare new attendees for the weekend experience. “To hear how people went from zero to hero just from attending one Erma was inspiring and hopeful. And to learn that this is not a one-off, like most conferences you go to.

To hear that some attendees had returned SIX times was astounding. And to find out EBWW is always fresh and even veterans can learn something is quite unbelievable. I think of it like the Woodstock of Writers' Workshops exuding peace, love and rock and roll," an attendee wrote.

New Yorker cartoonist and author **Bob Eckstein** impressed attendees with his on-the-spot drawings. In the words of one attendee: "He captures not just the speakers, but the mood and essence of Erma. His drawings are like a visual map to the workshop's milestones and markers."

The traditional closing **Stand-Up Comedy Night hosted by Jane Condon** did not disappoint the large turnout. "I'm so impressed with the newbies that took us by storm. Everyone was excellent and courageous beyond belief. I stayed until the last laugh. What a great way to top off an amazing conference experience!" one attendee wrote.

Other observations from the survey:

- "I was so energized and inspired while I was there that I was absolutely buzzing and dying to get my ideas out and onto paper."
- "I thought the staff and volunteers did an absolutely smashing job delivering incredibly high-quality content and experience for the money."
- This was my first Erma and it was WONDERFUL! It's clearly a well-oiled machine with top-notch speakers and lovely attendees. I would attend again in a heartbeat."
- "Thank you for a well-planned, informative, full workshop. It ran so smoothly and had so many opportunities to learn and connect. This is easily one of the best writing conferences in the USA."
- "I loved everything about this workshop. I learned. I laughed. I made connections. I was inspired. I was made to feel like a writer, even though this was my first time and I haven't published a book — yet."
- "Thank you for all the time, effort and love that goes into this workshop. Erma would be proud of all of us. I'm glad her legacy lives on."
- "You have created something truly unique and special — a gathering of like-minded people who want to do good in the world. Don't change a thing."
- "It's good to be around like-minded, insane people."
- "I've come away from Erma with a heart filled with joy, a mind filled with knowledge, incredible new friends and more inspiration than I thought possible and for that you have my undying gratitude."
- "The cake, as always, was excellent."

Attendees either loved or had some qualms about the food, and they offered a number of constructive suggestions, too — from ideas for future workshops and keynoters to the need for more advanced craft workshops and greater diversity.

The vast majority of attendees strongly prefer gathering in Dayton, but others appreciated the [Erma Home Schooling](#) virtual option that included the five keynote talks and four exclusive workshops. “I would like to attend in person sometime to get the energy of other writers around me, but this was the affordable option for me this year,” an attendee wrote.

In addition to survey responses, writers tapped out literally thousands of words to capture their experience at the 2024 Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop. For links to their newspaper and online stories, blogs and video clips, [click here](#).

The next Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop will be held March 26-28, 2026. Registration will open in November 2025. To keep in touch, like our [Facebook page](#), follow us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Threads](#), and subscribe to our free monthly e-newsletter. To subscribe, visit [our website](#) or click [here](#).